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Puel: We've got enough leaders here

CLAUDE Puel has hailed Saints' leadership qualities ahead of the League Cup final at Wembley.

The St Mary's chief has lost two captains this season, with Jose Fonte leaving in January for West Ham and Virgil van Dijk suffering a long-term injury, writes Peter Howard.

Puel isn't worried, however, with Steven Davis now wearing the armband and numerous other experienced options within the team.

"We've had to change many times the captain," he said. "It's difficult for the team because the leadership is always important."

"We started with Jose, we know it was difficult with his position in the club."

"But after it was Virgil, a strong character and personality with quality on the pitch."

"Now he's got an injury and now Davo [Steven Davis] takes his place with good leadership."

"Davo and Romeu, Yoshida, Ryan Bertrand can give good leadership now for the second part of the season."

"It's important to have many players that can take this important place."



Manolo Gabbiadini

"We've had great people and strong characters, like Jose or Virgil, Davo also, but he's more calm than the others."

"Davo and other players can give good leadership for this team."

Manolo Gabbiadini has scored three goals in two games since his £14.5m arrival from Napoli in January and Puel believes the Italian's form has breathed new confidence into the side.

Prior to the 25-year-old's arrival, Saints were on a miserable run in the Premier League.

"Manolo has played two games and scored, it's important," he said. "Many times since the beginning of the season we have done a fantastic job but without a good clinical."

"It was difficult to accept sometimes, but when a player like Gabbiadini scores it gives confidence to the team and the other strikers."

"We saw this for Shane in the last game against Sunderland."

"It's important to find a good clinical in the game."

"I don't know how many games we deserved to win with many chances without opportunity for the opponent."



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Roll up for Puel's

By Simon Carter



ROLL UP, roll up!

All aboard the Claude Puel emotional rollercoaster!

Now departing St Mary's heading for Wembley stadium!

Roll up, roll up!

It's certainly been a season of delightful highs and crushing lows for Claude Puel in his first season as Southampton FC manager.

Saints supporters have experienced the full range of emotions in 2016/17 - never really knowing what lies in store for them from one week to the next.

And never really knowing which version of Puel's Saints will turn up.

Will it be the one capable of shackling free-scoring Liverpool over two legs of a League Cup semi final? The one capable of entering a footballing cathedral such as Anfield and stunning the home fans?

Or will it be the one who have turned in a handful of drab displays, sentencing fans to some kind of 90-minute long sporting purgatory?

Who really knows?

Aboard the Claude Puel emotional rollercoaster, anything is possible.

Here, the Sports Pink charts the highs and the lows of the Frenchman's fascinating first few months at St Mary's.

Fans have complained that the football has been dull at times.

Possibly so, but the season - one of Saints' most gloriously inconsistent campaigns in living memory - certainly hasn't been.

LOW

Aug 27: Saints 1 Sunderland 1

Having already failed to beat Watford at St Mary's on the opening day, Saints required a late leveller from sub Jay Rodriguez to avoid an embarrassing home loss against the Black Cats.

HIGH

Sept 15: Saints 3 Sp Prague 0

After collecting just two points from four league games, Claude Puel was in desperate need of a first win. And thanks to a first half double from European debutant Charlie Austin, and a late third from Jay Rodriguez, he got just that as Saints took an early foothold on their Europa League group.

HIGH

Sept 25: West Ham 0 Saints 3

A fourth straight league and cup win - all with clean sheets -



LOW: Top scorer Charlie Austin suffers a serious shoulder injury on the night Saints crash out of the Europa League.

HIGH: Saints score their winner against Inter Milan (below) in the Europa League.



was delivered through goals from Charlie Austin, Dusan Tadic and James Ward-Prowse. After beating Swansea, this win made it back-to-back league successes - something Saints have been unable to match since.

LOW

Oct 20: Inter Milan 1 Saints 0

On a historic night in the San Siro, Claude Puel again leaves skipper Jose Fonte out of his starting XI, while top scorer Charlie Austin is on the bench and Nathan Redmond left out of the squad altogether. Saints still enjoy the bulk of the possession but fail to take their chances and concede relatively late on.

HIGH

Oct 26: Saints 1 Sunderland 0

Club record signing Soufiane Boufal, who had missed the start of his first season at Saints due to injury, celebrates his first start with a stunning 20-yard wonder strike against Sunderland in the League Cup.

HIGH

Nov 3: Saints 2 Inter Milan 1

Saints come from behind to record a famous victory against one of the most famous names in European football. Trailing at half-time, Virgil van Dijk levels on 64 minutes before Yuto Nagatomo needlessly puts through his own goal five minutes later.

LOW

Nov 6: Hull 2 Saints 1

The joy of beating Inter does not last long as Saints lose to a Hull side who entered the game having picked up only one point from their previous eight league games. Charlie Austin puts Saints ahead early on but they concede twice in three second half min-



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

rollercoaster ride!



HIGH: Dusan Tadic celebrates his goal in the win at West Ham.

HIGH: Soufiane Boufal hits a League Cup winner against Sunderland

utes.

LOW

Nov 24: Sp Prague 1 Saints 0
Jose Fonte is again left out and Charlie Austin is again on the bench as Saints turn in an insipid Europa League display to lose in

the Czech Republic.

HIGH

Nov 27: Saints 1 Everton 0
Saints sentence Ronald Koeman to defeat on his first return to St Mary's as Everton manager. Claude Puel throws in teenager

Josh Sims for his first ever start and is rewarded when the rookie provides the assist for what turns out to be Charlie Austin's first minute winner.

HIGH

Nov 30: Arsenal 0 Saints 2

First half goals from Jordy Clasie, his first for the club, and Ryan Bertrand, send Saints through to what is only the club's third ever League Cup semi final - and their first since 1987.

LOW

Dec 3: C Palace 3 Saints 0

Palace went into the game having lost six league games in a row, yet they still easily beat Saints thanks to goals from Christian Benteke (2) and James Tomkins. It is one of only two Palace home league wins all season.

LOW

Dec 8: Saints 1 Hapoel 1

The worst night of the season so far, as Saints not only crash out of the Europa League - conceding a late goal to previously unfancied Israeli outfit Hapoel - but also losing top scorer Charlie Austin to a serious shoulder injury.

HIGH

Dec 17: Cherries 1 Saints 3

Desperately in need of a morale booster, Claude Puel gets one at Dean Court thanks to a Jay Rodriguez brace and one from Ryan Bertrand.

LOW

Dec 31: Saints 1 West Brom 2

For the fourth time this season in the league, Saints lose after taking the lead - something which had previously happened at Arsenal and Hull and at home to Tottenham three days earlier. Shane Long scores his first Saints goal since last May, but the Baggies are level within two minutes.

LOW

Jan 2: Everton 3 Saints 0

Saints are well beaten by Ronald Koeman's men at Goodison Park.

Continued on page 4

Jose: Saints want it a lot

JOSE Mourinho has warned Saints ahead of the League Cup final: You won't want it more than us!

Saints upset the odds against United by winning the 1976 FA Cup and Mourinho has warned a similar outcome will be on the cards unless the current crop match the desire of Claude Puel's men.

"If they want it more than us, they win," he said. "So we have to be sure that they don't want it more than us."

"That's the point. They want a lot, of course they want a lot. Of course they want a lot, but I don't think that they want it more than us."

"So I think the best team on the pitch will win and it will not depend on motivations because I don't think that they are more motivated than us."

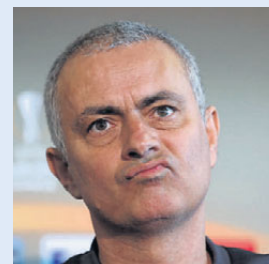
Mourinho was not interested in talking about matching Sir Alex Ferguson and Brian Clough's record of four wins in the competition, but pointed to the fact that United already have a trophy in the shape of the Community Shield.

This, though, is a far more important trophy and one that can help cultivate a winning mentality.

"I think when you have a taste of good things, you want to repeat," Mourinho said. "I think when you get used to winning, when you don't win, you miss it. You miss it."

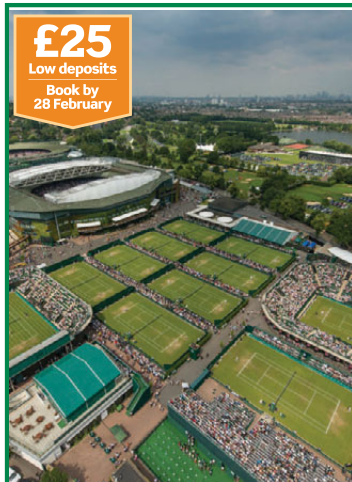
United have only lost one of their last 25 league and cup games - the second leg of the League Cup semi final at Hull City.

That is a daunting record, but Liverpool had only lost twice in 25 games prior to the first leg of the League Cup semi at St Mary's last month.



Jose Mourinho.

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Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Big highs & huge lows

from page 3

a defeat which comes just a few days after executive director of football Les Reed reveals that skipper Jose Fonte has handed in a transfer request.

HIGH

Jan 11: Saints 1 Liverpool 0

Nathan Redmond gives Saints a League Cup semi final first leg lead against Liverpool, who had only lost two of their previous 25 league and cup games all season.

HIGH/LOW

Jan 22: Saints 3 Leicester 0

Days after selling Jose Fonte to West Ham, the joy of beating Leicester is overshadowed by key centre half Virgil van Dijk



11 Jan 2017 - Photo Stuart

is seriously injured against Leicester.

HIGH

Jan 25: Liverpool 0 Saints 1

Against all the odds, Saints reach only their second League Cup final - not only managing to keep out the Premier League's top goalscorers, but then snatching an injury time winner through Shane Long.

LOW

Jan 28: Saints 0 Arsenal 5

The joy of reaching only the club's fifth Wembley cup final is quickly forgotten. Claude Puel makes 10 changes for the FA Cup home tie with Arsenal, fielding a young and inexperienced XI. Saints are 3-0 down by half-time and eventually suffer the club's heaviest ever post-war FA Cup defeat.

Continued on facing page

Benali 'choked' by Danny's kind gesture



Francis Benali

FRANCIS Benali recalls the moment he "choked up" when team-mate Danny Higginbotham offered him his FA Cup 2003 runners-up medal.

Saints had just lost 1-0 to Arsenal at the Millennium Stadium, in which Benali wasn't picked in the matchday squad and therefore didn't qualify for a medal, *writes Peter Howard*.

In an act of recognition of long-serving defender Benali's achievements at Saints, Higginbotham, an unused sub on the day, planned a kind gesture.

Benali was in his last season at St Mary's and barely played with Wayne Bridge first choice left-back.

"I was part of the squad but not in the 16," he said. "I had played in the fourth round win against Millwall, but wasn't picked for the final.

"On the day the squad all got medals, obviously the runners-up ones.

"In the changing rooms I was sat next to Danny Higginbotham and afterwards he turned to me and said 'you've been here your

entire career, you deserve my medal, I've only been here a short amount of time'.

"It really choked me up, although I didn't accept it. I'm not sure if it was a winners' medal the same would have happened though!"

Bridge was injured for the fourth round home win over Millwall, meaning Benali came in at left-back.

And despite refusing Higginbotham's offer, Benali eventually did get a medal - receiving one of three spares sent by the FA.

Puel: Let's keep emotions in check

By Peter Howard



CLAUDE Puel has urged his side to keep their emotions in check at Wembley tomorrow.

It is a valuable and rare opportunity for Saints to win a piece of major silverware and, as such, it is important in Puel's mind not to become overawed by the game's significance.

For some players it will be the first sniff they've ever got at winning a trophy and the St Mary's chief recognises the value of a "good balance of emotion".

"We know it's an exciting game," he said. "It's a fantastic game to play, but it's always important to keep a good balance of emotion, with a good attitude, because if we lose this we haven't stayed with concentration and quality on the pitch.

"The most important thing is to play good football with a strong togetherness, then we can have chances to win and perhaps to make a fantastic game.

"But at the beginning it's most important to play this game, to stay in the action and not to dream about what can happen."

Calmness may well be a vital ingredient for Saints as they come up against a club well-versed in occasions such as these.

United have played three times at Wembley in the last ten months, having played there in last season's FA Cup semi-final and final as well as the Community Shield.

Puel knows that picking his strongest team without any sentiment to those who have helped out during this impressive run to



Claude Puel.

the national arena is essential.

"Perhaps we have 25 players that can participate, but we, of course, can't use all of them for the final," he said.

"It's important to try and put in place the best team to try and win."

Saints have used nine academy

players on the way to Wembley with one of them, Olufela Olomola, making his debut in the fourth round win against Sunderland.

Puel believes that the youngsters' impact on the tournament is "important for the future" of the club.

"It's important to continue to

develop young players because it's the future for Southampton and to also have good results," he said.

"It's always difficult to develop young players because we don't know without experience if they can play well.

"But it's important for the fu-



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Rooney in line for United return at Wembley



Wayne Rooney.

Jose Mourinho is weighing up whether to start Wayne Rooney in the League final after the Manchester United ended speculation about his immediate future.

Talk had been growing over the 31-year-old making an Old Trafford exit, with his agent Paul Stretford understood to have been in China speaking to interested clubs.

However, Rooney confirmed on Thursday he was staying.

United boss Mourinho was pleased by the content and timing of the statement from Rooney,

who will be in the squad against Saints despite a recent hamstring injury and dropping down the pecking order.

United's all-time top scorer may even start after in-form Henrikh Mkhitaryan sustained a hamstring issue of his own.

"I have to make a decision," Mourinho said. "You know that we normally play two different systems - sometimes we play with two midfield players and a number 10 if you want to call it (that)."

"Sometimes we play with a number six and two midfield play-

ers in front.

"Without Mkhitaryan, if we want to play with a number 10, obviously Wayne, it's his position, it's where he was playing with us many matches, so he is an option for me."

Asked if sentiment comes into his team selection, Mourinho said: "It's the best 11 players. We win all together, it doesn't matter if you don't play much. I go for the best possible team."

Michael Carrick is available to the United boss and Phil Jones could return from a foot injury.

Puel's highs and lows

from facing page

Former Saint Theo Walcott hits a hat-trick.

LOW

Jan 31: Swansea 2 Saints 1

Having already lost at lowly Hull and Palace, Saints are beaten 2-1 at another relegation threatened club - one which had lost their last three home games 4-1, 3-0 and 4-0.

LOW

Feb 4: Saints 1 West Ham 3

For the fifth time this season, Saints take the lead in a league game and lose - a remarkable statistic. In almost a carbon copy of their defeat to West Brom, Saints concede an

JWP: This could be a springboard

By Peter Howard



JAMES Ward-Prowse believes that a League Cup final victory will act as a springboard to take Saints to the next level.

Claude Puel's men take on Manchester United in the final on Sunday and a victory would mark another high point in Saints' rise from League One to Premier League, writes Peter Howard.

Saints have improved their league position in each of their last seven seasons, have been in the Europa League for the past two campaigns as well as establishing themselves in the Premier League - despite a number of players and managers leaving.

A major accolade like the League Cup is one thing that has been missing from their years of improvements.

He said: "I really do think it could be [a springboard]. The club have been on that journey for a long time.

"The club has done very well to keep that going.

"I think it can go even higher.

"We have spoken about a cup run for a number of years now. To finally be there, we are going to make the most of it."

For Ward-Prowse, who is Saints' longest serving player at the tender age of 22, pulling on the Saints shirt and heading out at Wembley will be an emotional moment.

Ward-Prowse, who joined the club at eight years of age, plans to take a moment just before kick-off at the national arena to reflect on the journey he and the club have been on.



James Ward-Prowse in League Cup action at Anfield.

"There will be a part of me that will be looking back and see how far you have come, especially as a young player, and the journey you have made," he said.

"It's great to think I was watching the first team many years ago - and now I am representing them at Wembley.

"It's a great journey to have.

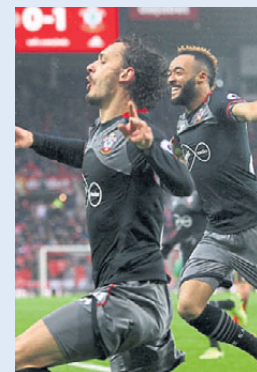
"But the end goal is to be a winner, holding the trophy aloft for the fans. And that is what we will be aiming to do."

But once he's out of the tunnel, he will be focussed on trying to thwart United's immense quality. He wants Saints to make an im-

pact on the game early.

He said: "Especially in the final it's important to make your stamp early on.

"Those are the sort of things we will be working on and making sure we have watched videos of them. I'm sure we'll be tactically clued up."



Manolo Gabbiadini

equaliser shortly after taking the lead and go on to lose.

HIGH

Feb 11: Sunderland 0 Saints 4

Manolo Gabbiadini, having previously scored on his debut, nets twice on his second appearance as Saints romp to a 4-0 win at rock bottom Sunderland. Playing 4-2-3-1 for the first time - the system both his predecessors at St Mary's favoured - Puel is rewarded with Saints' joint-biggest Premier League away win - matching the 4-0 success at Leicester in December 2001.

So, what ride is in store for the Saints fans at Wembley? A fantastic high or a depressing low?

Based on this season's league and cup results so far, no-one can be sure of the answer - certainly not Claude Puel.

Saints' great Wembley scorers list

CLAUDE Puel's class of 2017 will be aiming to join an exclusive band of Saints who have scored at Wembley.

Only nine players have found the target for Saints at the national stadium since it was opened in north west London 94 years ago.

Here, the Sports Pink looks back at what happened to those Wembley goalscorers.

Bobby Stokes

The man who scored Saints' most famous goal.

Even if the club end up beating Manchester United again - this time in the League Cup final - that is an honour that will still belong to Stokes.

It will possibly be an honour that will ALWAYS belong to the Portsmouth-born striker who sent the fans of his hometown club's fiercest rivals into dreamland on May 1 1976.

All these years on, no Saints fan - whether they were at the national stadium 41 years ago or not - will ever forget Stokes' 83rd minute decider.

It was just one of his 55 goals for the club in 264 league and cup appearances - but by far and away the most important.

Stokes had announced his potential in April 1969, scoring twice in the first half on his debut in a 5-1 Dell trouncing of Burnley.



Bobby Stokes

He would go on and score a lot of good goals for the club.

Fans will only ever remember one, though.

Within a year of inking his name into south coast footballing folklore, Stokes had played his last game for Saints.

Bobby Stokes would never ever go on to enjoy a similar moment to May 1 1976 again.

That is no real shock, for he had done something which every football-mad kid dreams about - and how many grow up to score the winner in an FA Cup final?

And he had done it for Southampton, a club which had never previously won a major trophy.

All these years on, it remains the club's only major trophy.

Claude Puel's class of 2017 can change that.

Stokes, sadly, is no longer around - he passed away in 1995 aged just 44 after contracting bronchial pneumonia.

But his legend lives on, as it always will.

David Peach

The left back who helped Saints win the 1976 FA Cup put the club in front when they returned to Wembley three years later to contest the League Cup final against Nottingham Forest.

Continued on facing page



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Saints in the League

By Simon Carter



SAINTS undoubtedly face a tough test when they run out against Manchester United at Wembley.

But it's not as hard a task as the one that faced Lawrie McMenemy's men when Saints contested their only ever League Cup final 38 years ago.

Back on March 17, 1979, Saints ran out at Wembley to face Brian Clough's Nottingham Forest.

Not only were Forest the League Cup holders, they were also the reigning First Division champions.

They were also en route to sensationally winning the European Cup at the first time of asking.

In terms of current form, Saints had the better record.

They had collected 12 points from nine league games - these were in the days of two points for a win - while Forest had only picked up 10 points in the same timeframe.

Forest were sixth, six points ahead of 10th place Saints, and they had played two games fewer.

Of more interest was the fact Clough's men had only lost twice in 26 league games (indeed, they were to lose just three of their 42 matches in 1978/79 - only to still finish eight points adrift of champions Liverpool).

Bearing in mind they had only lost three times in 42 games in winning the First Division title in 1977/78 - their first season back in the top flight - then the scale of Saints' task at Wembley was all too clear.

In a nutshell, they had to try and beat a Forest side who had only lost five times in 68 First Division games.

This was how the two sides lined up at Wembley ...

Goalkeeper

Peter Shilton had joined Forest from Stoke City early in 1977/78 for £250,000.

It was a no-brainer - Stoke had been relegated from the top flight at the end of the previous season while Forest had been promoted in their place.

Shilton was cup tied as Forest won the League Cup in 1977/78 - future Saint Chris Woods emerging as a star of the future - but quickly became a regular as the club won a remarkable league title.

No club has been crowned champions of England 12 months after winning promotion from the second tier since, and almost cer-



Lawrie McMenemy and Terry Curran walk around Wembley prior to the 1979 League Cup final. Picture top - Nick Holmes and Archie Gemmill.

tainly no club will ever again emulate Forest's staggering achievement.

Terry Gennoe had only made his Saints debut in September 1978, signed from Fourth Division Halifax Town. He went straight into the side after Peter Wells had conceded 12 goals in Saints' first six league games and kept his place right through to Wemb-

ley (though he was dropped after a 1-1 FA Cup draw with Arsenal which took place two days after the League Cup final).

Gennoe went into Wembley having kept five successive league clean sheets.

Left back

David Peach was one of two sur-

vivors from the Saints team that had won the FA Cup three years earlier (Nick Holmes was the other), while Colin Barrett was one of Forest's unsung heroes. Barrett was expected to have a tough task dealing with Saints' League Cup semi final goal hero, Terry Curran.

Right back


Saints v Manchester United

Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Cup final 1979 style



Nottingham Forest, above, celebrate retaining the League Cup. Below - Archie Gemmill makes a pass



Viv Anderson had created history a few months before the final by becoming the first black player to ever win a senior England international cap. Saints also had an international in that position - Yugoslavian Ivan Golac, who was in his first season in English football. McMenemy had signed the player from Partizan Beograd for just £50,000 after Golac had cel-

ebrated his 28th birthday - the age when Yugoslavia's Communist authorities would allow players to move abroad.

Anderson was injured and missed the final, though, so Clough drafted in 35-year-old veteran Frank Clark in his place.

Central defence

Clough had another key player out injured at the heart of his back four as well - Kenny Burns. The Scot had won the Football Writers' Footballer of the Year award in 1977/78 and had established a great partnership with Larry Lloyd. David Needham, who like Shilton had been cup tied and missed the previous season's League Cup final win, instead

partnered Lloyd at Wembley.

McMenemy's central defensive pair was Chris Nicholl and Malcolm Waldron.

Northern Ireland international Nicholl was looking for his third League Cup final win, having helped Aston Villa triumph in 1975 and 1977 (when he scored in a final replay win against Everton at Old Trafford).

Emsworth-born Waldron - the only Hampshire man in Saints' Wembley team - had been left out in favour of Mike Pickering in the previous season's Second Division promotion-winning side. But he emerged as a key member of the 1978/79 team, playing in every league game.

Midfield

McMenemy held the ace in veteran Ball, his inspirational captain.

The World Cup winner's dual with Forest skipper John McGovern was expected to have a big say in where the silverware ended up.

This was Ball's fourth Wembley final.

In his first, he wrote his name into footballing folklore by helping England win the 1966 World Cup final.

Three years later, he was in the Everton team that lost the FA Cup final to West Bromwich Albion.

In 1972, he ended up a loser too - his Arsenal side beaten 1-0 by Leeds United in another FA Cup final.

Prior to his fourth Wembley cup final, Ball told the Southern Daily Echo: "All I know about this final is that I'm going there to enjoy every minute of it. I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"It's a great honour for any player to reach the final of a cup competition in the greatest footballing country in the world."

Alongside Ball in the engine room were Steve Williams and Holmes, while Forest's central area was completed by two internationals - Scottish star Archie Gemmill and Northern Ireland's Martin O'Neill.

Wingers

Both Wembley finalists used one winger.

Forest's John Robertson was one of many enjoying a superb run under Clough's management, while Saints' Terry Curran had been a regular after signing from Derby County the previous summer for £60,000. Curran, who had spent two years at Forest before signing for East Midlands neighbours Derby, was to play his last game for Saints at Wembley - he stepped down two divisions to sign for Jack Charlton's Sheffield Wednesday for £100,000 shortly after the final. **Cont on page 8**

Wembley goal heroes

from facing page

He was no stranger to hitting the target - as his record of 44 Saints goals in 282 appearances indicates. Most of those, however, were penalties - and Peach's Wembley strike came from open play and a one-two with skipper Alan Ball.

Having made his Saints debut in February 1974 - when Saints crashed 7-0 at Ipswich - the player spent six years at The Dell before leaving to join Swindon in February 1980 for £150,000 - a lot of money for a club who were then in the third division.

Nick Holmes

Along with Peach, he is the only man to have played in two Wembley finals for Saints.

And, like Peach, he scored in his second - the 1979 League Cup final against Nottingham Forest.

It was a great goal, too - a fierce drive from just inside the penalty area which arrowed past future Dell colleague Peter Shilton and into the corner of the net.

That goal gave Saints, now only 3-2 down, late hope - but to no avail.

Southampton-born Holmes, a loyal one-club man, played 543 games for the club, making his debut in March 1974 and his last appearance in February 1987.



Nick Holmes.

In 1999 he emigrated to Florida to set up a property management company, which he sold in 2004.

In July 2002, he returned to the local football scene when he was offered the manager's job at Salisbury City. Under Holmes' management, the Wiltshire club won the Southern League Premier Division title in 2004/05 and the Conference South play-off final in 2006/07.

That took Salisbury into the top tier of non league football for the first time ever.

He became Salisbury's general manager in July 2009, with Tommy Widdington taking control of the first team. Holmes left Salisbury the following summer by mutual consent.

Matt Le Tissier

No introduction is needed for the man still revered by generations of Saints supporters as 'Le God'.

The one club man netted 209 goals in 540 competitive appearances for the club, making his debut in 1986 and playing his last game in 2001.

One of those goals was at Wembley, bringing Saints back into the 1992 ZDS Cup final against Nottingham Forest.

Since retiring from competitive football in 2002, Le Tissier has carved out a high profile career as a Sky Sports TV pundit. **Cont on page 8**

Wembley goal heroes

from page 7

Kevin Moore

The centre half had already played 400 games for hometown club Grimsby Town when Saints signed him in the summer of 1987 for £150,000.

Then Saints boss Chris Nicholl had played alongside Moore, then 29, at Grimsby and signed his former colleague after Mark Wright had left for Derby County.

Moore played 35 league games in 1987/88 - the most he would ever manage in a league season for Saints.

His moment of glory at Wembley came when he headed in a Matt Le Tissier corner to equalise at 2-2 in the ZDS Systems Cup final against Nottingham Forest.

Moore would stay at The Dell two more years, playing his 185th and final game in April 1994 before joining a Fulham side managed by his former Saints boss Ian Branfoot.

Sadly, Moore was diagnosed in January 2010 as suffering from Pick's Disease, a rare form of dementia. His former Dell colleagues rallied round to help fund raise for the 24-hour care he required, but he passed away on his 55th birthday in April 2013.

Rickie Lambert

It was no surprise to see Lambert add his name to the list of Saints who



Rickie Lambert

had scored at Wembley.

Going into the 2010 Johnstone's Paint Trophy final, he had belted 30 goals in 48 league and cup appearances for the club after a £1m move from Bristol Rovers.

Goal number 31 quickly followed, Lambert opening the scoring from the penalty spot.

We all know what happened next - Lambert the talisman for Saints' rise from League 1 to the Premier League.

The goals, though, have dried up since he left Saints to make a dream £4m move to Anfield in the summer of 2014.

He only managed two league goals for Liverpool in 2014/15, where he struggled for starts even though Luis Suarez had been sold and Daniel Sturridge was injured.

Moving onto West Brom for £3m, Lambert only scored once in 20 league appearances in 2015/16 (and that was a penalty).

Dropping down into the Championship last summer to sign for Cardiff, Lambert has four goals in 16 league games for the Welsh club, though he has not scored since November.

Adam Lallana

Lallana, then 21, was enjoying his most prolific ever season with Saints when he scored the second goal in the 2010 JPT final. Cont on facing page



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Forest fire is too

from page 7

Strikers

Forest forward Tony Woodcock had made his senior England debut in 1978 while strike partner Garry Birtles would win his first cap in 1980.

Birtles was proving a remarkable purchase, considering Clough had paid local non league club Long Easton just £2,000 to sign him in 1977.

Birtles ended up as Forest's 26-goal top scorer in 1978/79, his first full season in the first team (including two goals at Wembley against Saints).

A similar event these days would be for Saints to sign a player from AFC Totton or Winchester and for them to score over 20 goals in their first full season - a season which would end with Saints winning the Champions League.

That was why Garry Birtles was a remarkable purchase.

Up front for Saints were Nottingham-born Phil Boyer and youngster Austin Hayes.

Boyer was Saints' leading scorer, while Hayes, just 20, had only appeared in 10 league games by the time of the Wembley final - and four of those had been as a sub.

He won his place against Forest, though, after scoring in two of Saints' previous four league games in the run-up to the final.

Hayes, who won his sole Republic of Ireland senior cap two months after the final, was to end up playing just 32 times for Saints before moving to Millwall.

In December 1986, he sadly died aged just 28 from lung cancer - just three weeks after the illness was diagnosed.

Substitutes

Tony Sealey had already played the last of his seven league games for Saints by the time he appeared as an 83rd-minute sub at Wembley.

Aged just 19, he was brought on for fellow youngster Hayes - and that would be, like Curran, the last time Saints fans saw him in their club's shirt.

Midfielder Ian Bowyer was Forest's unused sub at Wembley.

On paper, Forest were the undoubted favourites.

And it was Clough's side who would end up retaining the trophy, following a 3-2 victory.

Saints more than played their part in an entertaining final, however.

This was how the *Southern Daily Echo* journalist Peter East reported the final in the following Monday's paper (part of three pages of coverage, compared to



the 20-page pullout which will appear in next Monday's *Echo* for Saints v Manchester United).

'SAINTS had Nottingham Forest on the rack for half-an-hour in the League Cup Final at Wembley on Saturday.

But Forest, the League Cup holders and First Division champions who could also win this sea-

son's European Cup, showed their true capabilities as they won the game with a blistering second-half performance.

And in the end, superbly taken goals by David Peach after 16 minutes and Nick Holmes after 87 minutes served only to preserve Saints' respectability.

In between those memorable moments, Forest's fast and fear-

less Gary Birtles established himself as the hero of the hour-and-a-half by scoring in the 50th and 77th minutes and Tony Woodcock netted after 82 minutes to make the game safe.

The moment of misery came for Saints in the 50th minute when big Chris Nicholl, who has made a marvellous contribution to Saints' successes of the past two



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

hot to handle ...



Lawrie McMenemy leads Saints out for the 1979 League Cup final. Below - Lawrie applauds the fans after the final whistle.



Saints emerge from the Wembley tunnel for the second half back in 1979.



seasons, put his side in trouble.

Saints were clinging grimly to the lead gained by Peach's 16th-minute goal and were doing well in the face of a really determined Forest onslaught at the start of the second half.

Then winger John Robertson, who had been given little scope by right back Ivan Golac, drove the ball in low but as goalkeeper

Terry Gennoe prepared for a comfortable pick-up, Nicholl put his foot in the way of the ball, Gennoe was stranded and Birtles won the race for the loose ball to crack it into the net.

Then with extra time beginning to look a distinct possibility, Nicholl, twice a League Cup winner with Aston Villa - in 1975 and 1977 - saw his chances of a third

triumph disappear when Birtles sped on to a pass from Woodcock and got the better of him to make it 2-1 in the 77th minute.

Saints' hopes died completely after 82 minutes when Scottish World Cup player Archie Gemmill pushed a pass forward for Woodcock to hammer a splendid shot past Gennoe for Forest's third goal.

But there was at least some consolation for Saints. They did manage to put two goals past the brilliant Peter Shilton and there was no fluke about either of them.

For the first, Peach pushed a short pass to skipper Alan Ball on the edge of the Forest penalty area and darted forward before receiving the return and rounding Shilton to score.

Then with the game virtually lost, Saints produced another quality goal when a cross from one time Forest winger Terry Curran was turned back by Malcolm Waldron for Holmes to crash home an unstoppable shot.

It was too late to save the game, but Saints at least had the satisfaction of knowing that they had battled with one of the best teams in Europe and not let themselves down.

In the first half, they were worthy of their lead with Waldron keeping a very tight rein on Woodcock and Nicholl clamping down well on Birtles.

At the same time, Golac was making sure that Forest gained nothing from the left-wing proings of Robertson, with Steve Williams doing well in front of him to prevent Gemmill from giving Robertson the support he suddenly needed.

On the Saints left, Peach was having an outstanding game and he did far more than scoring a goal, while Holmes, too, was getting through a tremendous amount of work.

Meanwhile, those two vastly experienced skippers Alan Ball and John McGovern were having a rare old battle of wits in the middle and up to half-time Ball had the better of it.

Up front, it was a waiting game, and against those towering central defenders Lloyd and Needham, Phil Boyer and Austin Hayes were given little scope, but they tugged and tore at the Forest defence to add to the uncertainty of the champions, while Curran was doing well enough out on the right against Frank Clark.

But in the second half, the picture changed and it was almost a carbon copy of the game I saw in Nottingham last Wednesday when Archie Gemmill suddenly got into his stride and things began to happen.

Gemmill's improvement had an immediate impact and Saints suddenly began to look stretched, with extra room being afforded to Robertson, who was only too pleased to take advantage.

At the same time, McGovern and O'Neill were growing in confidence and the key battle for midfield supremacy swung dramatically in Forest's favour.

Continued on page 10

Wembley goal heroes

from facing page

His header at Wembley was the midfielder's 16th strike of 2009/10 - and he was to go on and add four more that term.

Like Lambert, Lallana would turn out to be a key member of the Saints side that went from the depths of the third tier to finishing in the top eight of the Premier League in 2013/14.

Like Lambert, Lallana was then tempted to turn his back on Saints and move to Liverpool in the summer of 2014.

Like Lambert, he was by then a senior England international.

Unlike Lambert, though, some of the Saints fans turned on Lallana for his lack of loyalty.

And unlike Lambert, Lallana has emerged as a key figure at Anfield, making over 100 league and cup appearances and scoring 20 goals. H

He has also become a regular in the England set-up and earlier this season scored in three successive internationals - against Slovakia, Scotland and Spain.

Papa Waigo

The Senegalese international was brought in on loan by Pardew - though executive chairman Nicola Cortese's Italian contacts had no doubt come in useful as well - shortly after the start of the 2009/10 season.

Then 26, the winger's career was in



Papa Waigo

need of a pick-me-up.

After making his Serie B debut for Verona in 2003, he signed for divisional rivals Cesena two years later.

After a successful time - where he was the highest-scoring non-Italian in 2006-07 - Waigo signed for Genoa for around £3m in the summer of 2007.

The following January, he was on the move again - this time to Fiorentina. There he made an instant impact with two goals in his first three games, including one in the 3-2 success at eventual champions Juventus.

For whatever reason, Waigo only made a handful of further appearances for the club and was loaned out in 2008/09 to Serie B club Lecce.

From there, he arrived at Saints on a season long loan, where he was mainly used as an impact sub by Pardew.

He was restricted to just 11 third tier starts, but made a further 24 sub appearances - scoring five goals.

He netted another five goals in the cups, including the brace against Torquay that ensured Saints avoided a first round JPT exit.

The lower division Gulls were leading 2-0 at St Mary's and heading for a shock win when Waigo forced extra time with a second half double.

Saints eventually won 5-3 on penalties, taking the first step on a journey which would lead them to Wembley.

Continued on page 11

1979 League Cup final flashback

from page 9

So did the game, although Saints did attempt a late shuffle in sending on substitute Tony Sealy for his first taste of League Cup action in place of Hayes in the 83rd minute.

The only booking of the afternoon came after 61 minutes when Curran had his name taken by referee Peter Reeves, who handled the game well, for a foul on McGovern.'

WEMBLEY TEAMS

Nottingham Forest: Shilton, Barrett, Clark, McGovern, Lloyd, Needham, O'Neill, Gemmill, Birtles, Woodcock, Robertson, Substitute: Bowyer.

Southampton: Gennoe, Golac, Peach, Williams, Nicholl, Waldron, Ball, Bowyer, Hayes (Sealy 83 min), Holmes, Curran.

Referee: Peter Reeves (Leicester)

Attendance: 100,000

Receipts: £430,000

McMenemy told the Echo afterwards: "I don't expect anyone not to be disappointed, but I have thanked all of them for reaching the final. No-one was disgraced and it was a magnificent achievement to get here."

Reflecting on a final of two



Lawrie McMenemy and Terry Curran prior to the final.

halves, he said: "We won the first, but I told my players that Cloughie was bound to gee Forest up for the second and he did. Their performance was a credit to him. They really set about us and we couldn't get our rhythm back. But I'm sure we'll be better for the experience."

Ball said: "At half-time I was very, very pleased with the way we played."

"Then we started giving the ball away, three or four players made slight mistakes, and we had to pay the price."

"But we have managed to score two goals against a Forest team who are in the quarter finals of the European Cup and not many sides would have done that."

"And we have given the country a Wembley final which was every bit as good as everyone imagined it would be, if not better. Not many teams do that either."

Ahead of the final, McMenemy had said: "This is a team to be built on for the future and not one to be taken apart."

History proved that statement untrue.

Only Holmes, Nicholl, Golac and Williams remained regulars two seasons later.



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

The amazing life

By Simon Carter



ZLATAN Ibrahimovic could yet cap his first season in England with a Wembley hat-trick.

But his incredible run of league successes is almost certainly going to come to an end unless Saints' League Cup final opponents Manchester United can piece together a startling end-of-season run.

Some pundits cast doubt over whether the Swedish legend would be able to cut it at the age of 35 in his debut Premier League campaign.

But he has made a mockery of the doubters since arriving last summer, with his recent strike against Leicester seeing him become the first United player since Sir Alex Ferguson's retirement to reach 20 goals.

Ibrahimovic will no doubt be targeting 35 goals as United are still fighting on four fronts.

He has already won one trophy at Wembley this season, the Community Shield.

He has the chance to win a second this weekend, and United remain on track to retain the FA Cup.

In addition, the club are still in the Europa League - giving Ibrahimovic the chance to win a major European club trophy for the first time in his glittering career.

It appears a matter of when rather than if the one-year option in his contract is triggered to extend his deal beyond the summer.

The striker has been linked to Napoli, along with clubs in China and the United States, but Jose Mourinho cannot see him being anywhere other than Old Trafford in 2017/18.

"I'm totally convinced that he is going to stay," Mourinho said. "He came with the intention of staying two years. The first year is going - probably not in his mind because he is a very ambitious guy - better than every expectation."

"He knows that we are going to try again to improve next season and try to share with him in a fantastic way probably the last year of his career at the highest level, so I'm convinced that he's staying."

"I give him the possibility of an extra day off to go somewhere, to go Sweden - he never goes. Everything is stable with him, so I'm totally convinced that he is going to stay."

Ibrahimovic will be desperate to win a Premier League medal to go alongside ones he has previously won in the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and France.



Zlatan Ibrahimovic wheels away after scoring a penalty against Saints last August.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic (right) with former Saints skipper Jose Fonte.

Prior to this season, he had a truly incredible record of hoovering up domestic league titles.

In 15 seasons since the start of his first term at Ajax Amsterdam in 2001/02, going through until the end of 2015/16, Ibrahimovic won an eye-popping 13 championship.

And he was runner-up in the other two!

This is his fantastic record ...

2001-02 Ajax (Eredivisie)

Co Adriaanse, the manager who signed Ibrahimovic from Swedish club Malmo for around £5m, left in November and was replaced by Ronald Koeman. Ibrahimovic scored six times in 24 games as Ajax won the Dutch League.

2002-03 Ajax (Eredivisie)

Despite 13 goals in 25 appearances - and 21 goals in all competitions - Ajax finished runners-up. It would be the last time until 2012 that Ibrahimovic would not win a domestic league title medal.

2004-05 Juventus (Serie A)

Sold to Juventus in August 2004 for around £12m, the striker net-

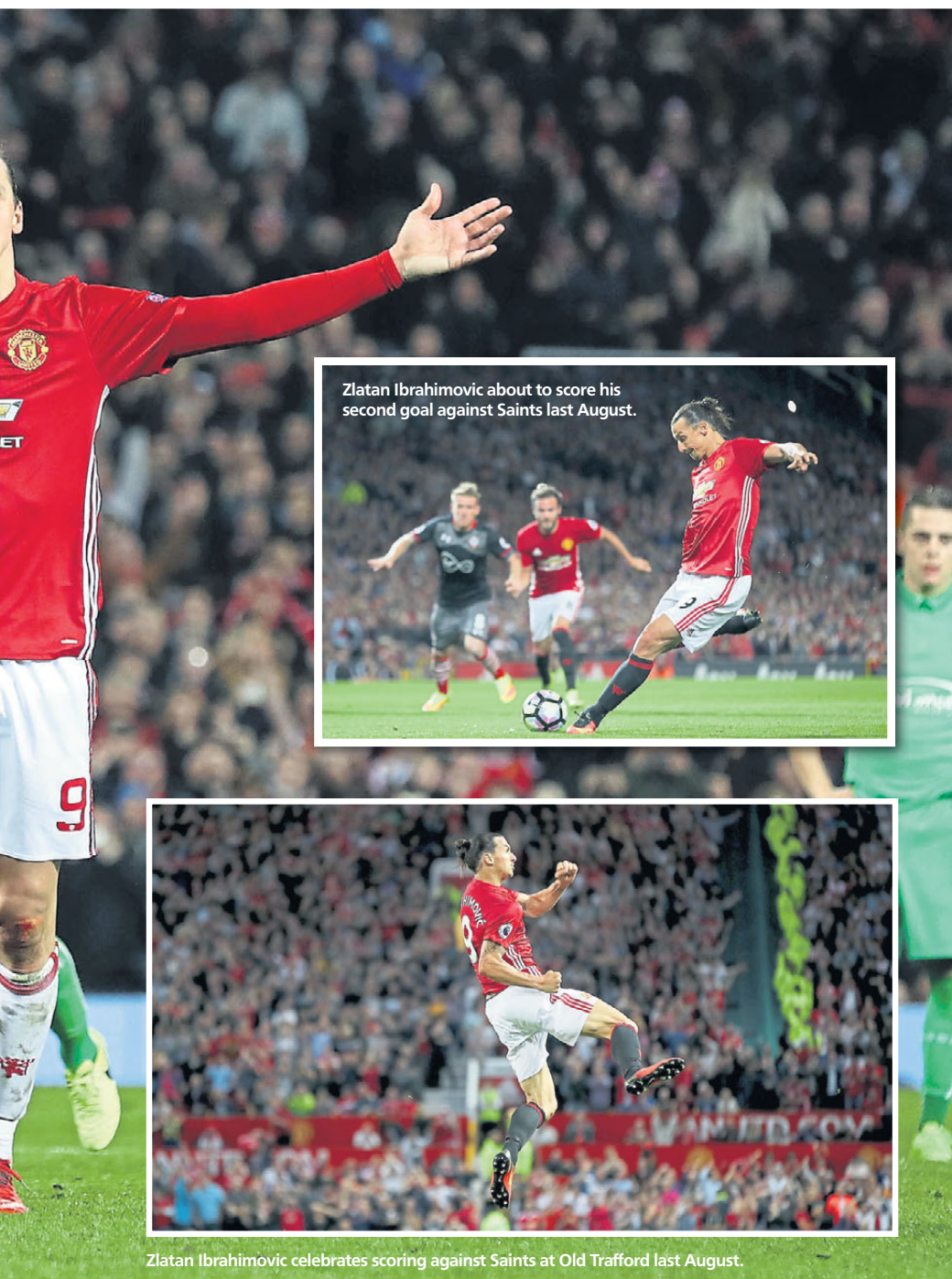


Saints v Manchester United

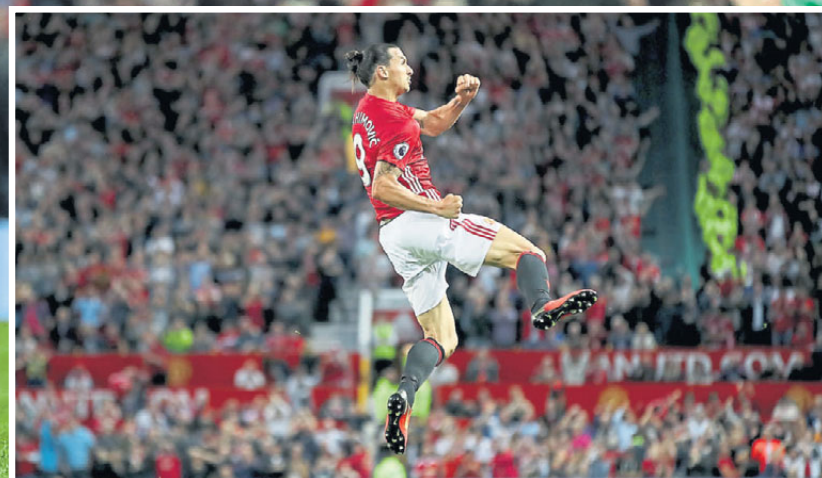


Wembley, League Cup final 2017

of Ibrahimovic



Zlatan Ibrahimovic about to score his second goal against Saints last August.



Zlatan Ibrahimovic celebrates scoring against Saints at Old Trafford last August.

ted 16 times in 35 games as Juve, under the management of future England boss Fabio Capello, won the league title.

2005-06 Juventus (Serie A)

Only seven goals in 35 league appearances, but Juve finished first (albeit they were then relegated to Serie B for their part in the Calciopoli match-fixing scandal that

rocked the country).

2006-07 Inter Milan (Serie A)

Obviously Ibrahimovic was not going to play in Serie B, so he made a £20m move to Inter Milan. He promptly scored 15 times in 27 games as Roberto Mancini's Inter replaced Juventus as league champions.

2007-08 Inter Milan (Serie A)

Ibrahimovic was top scorer with 17 in only 26 games as Inter retained their Serie A title.

2008-09 Inter Milan (Serie A)

Under new boss Jose Mourinho, the Swede enjoyed his most prolific Serie A season with 25 goals in 35 appearances. Inter won the title again.

2009-10 Barcelona (La Liga)

Ibrahimovic moved to Barcelona for a fee of around £55m, with Barca striker Samuel Eto'o also moving to the San Siro. Sixteen goals in 29 games helped bring him another title, this time his first in La Liga. He also won the only European honour of his illustrious career - the 2009 European Super Cup - and helped Barca win the 2009 World Club Championship.

2010-11 AC Milan (Serie A)

After claiming his relationship with Barca boss Pep Guardiola had terminally broken down, Ibrahimovic was loaned back to Milan - this time to AC. Fourteen goals in 29 games saw him win his sixth Serie A title winners' medal.

2011-12 AC Milan (Serie A)

After his move to AC was made permanent, for around £24m, Ibrahimovic enjoyed a phenomenal season, netting 28 goals in only 32 Serie A games - yet his side could only finish runners-up.

2012-13 Paris St Germain (Ligue 1)

Another move, this time swapping Milan for Paris. His £15.7m move saw his total transfer fees rise to above £130m.

Ibrahimovic fired 30 goals in only 34 league games as Paris SG won the French title.

2013-14 PSG (Ligue 1)

Another 26 goals in 33 appearances helped bring about another title.

2014-15 PSG (Ligue 1)

Nineteen goals in 24 matches and a third French league title in a row.

2015-16 PSG (Ligue 1)

The most prolific season in Ibrahimovic's career, with an astonishing 38 goals in only 31 league games. He scored 17 goals more than anyone else in the top flight as Paris SG won the title by a whopping 31 points.

In all, he netted 44 goals in 46 club matches.

2016-17 Manchester United (Premier League)

Arriving for his first ever taste of English League football, Ibrahimovic tasted Wembley success in one of his first United appearances - scoring the winner in the Community Shield success against Leicester.

Ibrahimovic enters the final against Saints having struck 24 times for United in 35 league and cup appearances. He scored on his league debut, in a 3-1 win at Bournemouth, and netted twice on his home debut against Saints.

Goal heroes

from page 9

Waigo was also on target two rounds later in another shoot-out victory at St Mary's - this time against Norwich (who included Fraser Forster in goal) after a 2-2 draw.

At Wembley, Waigo pounced to head Saints into a 3-0 lead against Carlisle.

It was the 10th, and as it turned out last, goal of what would be his only ever taste of English football.

Returning to Fiorentina, Waigo was loaned out in 2010/11 to Grosseto and in the summer of 2011 was sold to Serie B club Ascoli.

After 15 goals in 40 appearances in 2011/12 he was on the move again, this time joining United Arab Emirates club Al-Wahda. Now 33, he is still playing in the middle east for Al Urooba, who he joined last year.

Michail Antonio

Then 19, the winger arrived on loan at St Mary's in October 2009 - signed by Pardew from his former club Reading.

Antonio was never a regular starter in League 1 - making as many sub appearances (14) as starts.

But he did start five of Saints' six JPT ties, coming off the bench in the other.

Antonio's third goal for the club gave them a JPT Southern Area final first leg success at MK Dons in January 2010.

And his fourth goal, on his 31st appearance, arrived in the Wembley final - his low shot from just outside the penalty area putting Saints into an



Antonio scores at Wembley

unassailable 4-0 lead.

The goal came on his 20th birthday.

Antonio scored the winner in a league game against Charlton soon after and then struck twice in another victory over Carlisle - this time a 3-2 League 1 triumph.

After helping Sheffield Wednesday to promotion from League 1 in 2011/12, Antonio's loan move was made permanent.

He later won a £1.5m move to Championship rivals Nottingham Forest ahead of the 2014/15 season. Fourteen league goals in his first season at the club was followed by four in his first five league and cup games in 2015/16.

Such form alerted West Ham, who splashed out £7.5m to take Antonio into the Premier League.

He netted his first goal for the Hammers on his fourth start on December 28 2015 - ironically against Saints.

He also set up Andy Carroll's winner in the same game, when his shot came back off the underside of the crossbar.

Antonio has since gone from strength to strength.

Last August he was named in Sam Allardyce's first (and only) senior England squad for the World Cup qualifier against Slovakia.

After ending his first season at West Ham with nine goals, he has eight to his name already this term.

Played for both finalists

Twelve men have played for Saints and Manchester United since the Second World War. Here, the Sports Pink looks back at them all ...

Norman Kirkman

The full back made unofficial appearances for Manchester United during the war, but never played a competitive game. Moved to Saints from Leicester in 1950, but made only 20 league appearances for the club. After spells managing Exeter City and Bradford Park Avenue he dropped out of football to become a baker. He later scouted for several clubs, including Saints.

Francis Burns

The left back made his United debut in 1967 and played in six European Cup ties in the club's run to the 1967/68 European Cup final, though he lost his place in the final to Shay Brennan. After 121 league appearances for United he joined Saints for £50,000 in 1972. He could not displace Joe Kirkup as first choice left back, though, and moved back to Lancashire to join Preston the following year after just 21 Saints games. At Deepdale he was reunited with former Old Trafford team-mate Bobby Charlton, who had just taken over as Preston boss. Indeed, Burns was his first signing.



Ron Davies

Ron Davies

United boss Sir Matt Busby described the Welshman as 'the finest centre forward in Europe' after Davies had scored all Saints' goals in a 4-1 win at Old Trafford in August 1969.

Davies was a prolific scorer for Saints, with 85 goals in 119 First Division games in his first three seasons at The Dell.

His four-goal show at Old Trafford made up a third of his entire 1969/70 top flight tally, though.

He left Saints in March 1974 after netting 153 goals in 277 appearances.

In November 1974, he moved to Old Trafford, Tommy Docherty paying Pompey £43,000 for his services.

By this time, though, Davies' best days were long gone. He only made 10 appearances for United - eight in the Second Division and two in the FA Cup - and didn't score at all.

Jim McCalliog

The midfielder scored for Sheffield Wednesday in the 1966 FA Cup final and for Wolves in the 1972 UEFA Cup final. However, he lost both finals - to Everton and Tottenham respectively.

McCalliog moved to Old Trafford in March 1974 for £70,000 from Wolves, but could not prevent the club being relegated to the second division (Saints went down the same season as well). Cont on facing page



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

The debt United

By Simon Carter



MANCHESTER United Football Club owe a huge debt of gratitude to Saints for handing them a League Cup drubbing over 30 years ago.

But it took them a while to realise it!

Saints have only ever beaten the Red Devils in the League Cup on one occasion.

That was a 4-1 third round replay success at The Dell in early November, 1986.

An 18-year-old Matt Le Tissier jumped off the bench to score twice as Ron Atkinson's injury-hit United conceded three goals in the last 20 minutes.

Within 48 hours, Atkinson - United's boss since the summer of 1981 - had been sacked.

In his place arrived Aberdeen manager Alex Ferguson.

And the rest, as they like to say in articles such as this, is history.

Of course it is impossible to say whether Atkinson would have kept his job for a year or so longer had United won at The Dell.

If he had done, would Ferguson have ever racked up at Old Trafford? That's also totally hypothetical.

What we do know is that storm clouds had been forming over Atkinson's head ever since the start of the 1986/87 season - his sixth at the club.

At the time of their League Cup drubbing, United had won only four times in 13 First Division games - including a 5-1 thrashing of Chris Nicholl's Saints at Old Trafford - and were rooted in the bottom four.

Twelve months earlier, at the start of the 1985/86 season, Atkinson had masterminded a run of 10 straight wins from the start of the season.

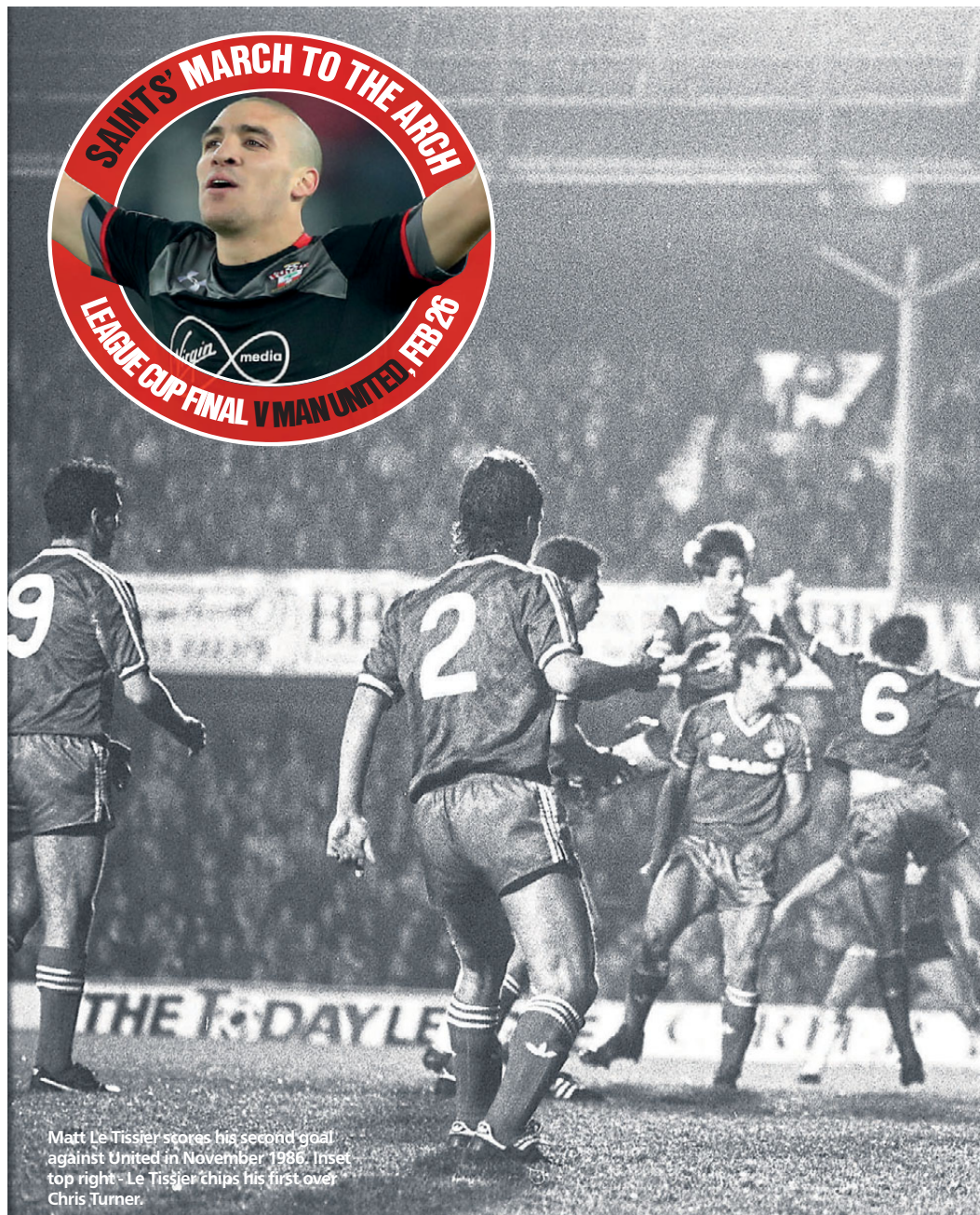
After 15 matches United were still unbeaten, but could not maintain such form and were eventually overtaken by Liverpool. United's wait for a first top flight title since 1967 went on ...

The 1985/86 season was Atkinson's fifth at Old Trafford and he had finished in the top four in all of them. In addition, he had twice won the FA Cup - in 1983 and 1985 - and reached the 1983 League Cup final and the 1984 European Cup Winners Cup semi final.

As a result, he was statistically the club's most successful manager since the legendary Sir Matt Busby.

All that counted for nothing on the evening of Tuesday November 4, 1986, at The Dell.

Following a 0-0 draw at Old Trafford the previous week - in front



Matt Le Tissier scores his second goal against United in November 1986. Inset top right - Le Tissier chips his first over Chris Turner.

of a crowd of only 23,639 - the odds favoured Saints on home soil.

United, for a start, hadn't won an away league game all season, and Atkinson was wrestling with some major injuries.

Key midfielders Bryan Robson and Gordon Strachan were both ruled out with hamstring injuries, while Danish defender John Sivebaek was also sidelined.

Utility player Colin Gibson, though, was welcomed back after being absent since mid August through injury.

Nicholl, though, was also reporting injury worries.

There were pre-match doubts over top scorer Colin Clarke (thigh), winger Danny Wallace (ankle) and left back Mark Dennis (knee).

As it turned out, all three played after receiving painkilling injections.

Atkinson's injury situation went from bad to worse, though, with both Norman Whiteside and Gibson having to go off in the first half.

Nicky Wood, a rookie teenager, was brought on for Whiteside - an indication of how few players Atkinson had available to him (remember, these were pre-squad rotation days - Nicholl and Atkinson would never have contemplated fielding fringe players or untried youngsters just to give them some game-time).

Whiteside and Gibson had both gone off injured by the time George Lawrence fired Saints into the lead two minutes before half-time.



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

will always owe!



Lawrence received a pass from Jimmy Case, cut inside his marker, and fired a stunning 25-yard shot past a startled Chris Turner.

Saints had to wait until 19 minutes from time to double their lead, Clarke knocking down a Glenn Cockerill header for Wallace to half-volley in.

That was virtually his last contribution to the evening, as he hobbled off due to his long-standing ankle complaint.

No matter.

In his place came Le Tissier,

who within minutes had netted the first of his 161 Saints goals.

With United defenders appealing for offside, Le Tissier collected a pass from Clarke before sublimely chipping a stranded Turner from outside the penalty area.

He didn't have to wait long for his second goal, rising impressively to head in a Case corner.

United replied late on when Peter Davenport latched onto a poor Gerry Forrest back pass to make it 4-1.

The damage had long been done, however.

A dejected Atkinson told Echo reporter Bob Brunsell afterwards: "The longer the game went on, the more our injury problems took their toll.

"We had no answer to Jimmy Case, who controlled the show from midfield, and we couldn't pin down George Lawrence either. He started to run riot."

Atkinson's injury worries obviously won him little boardroom support, where phone calls to east

coast of Scotland were no doubt preparing to be made.

On Thursday November 6, 1986, he was sacked.

An era was over, and a dynasty was about to be created.

Ferguson's impact, famously, was not anything resembling immediate.

He lost his first game in charge, 2-0 at Oxford United - yes, Oxford in the First Division, how the footballing landscape has changed in three decades - and won only one of his first six league matches. United ended up 11th - their lowest league position since Dave Sexton's side had finished eighth in 1980-81 (leading to Atkinson's arrival, though United had been keen to interview Saints boss Lawrie McMenemy too).

United's fans were also slow to turn up in their numbers to back Ferguson. For an end of season league game against Wimbledon in his first season, only 31,686 bothered to turn up at Old Trafford - over 43,000 fewer than regularly pack the stadium these days.

Ferguson's first few years, in fact, were nowhere near as impressive as Atkinson's had been. Big Ron won the FA Cup in his second season and reached another cup final the same term.

Ferguson didn't get anywhere near a cup until winning the FA Cup in May 1990 - virtually three and a half years after his arrival at Old Trafford.

In that time, United actually finished 1988/89 in 11th place - four places below Coventry, two below QPR and one below Millwall.

If you thought that was bad, the following season United were even worse - finishing 13th (below Saints, Wimbledon, QPR and Coventry).

Compare that to life in the modern-day Premier League fishbowl spotlight, where Louis Van Gaal received the sack for finishing fifth and winning the FA Cup!!!!

What strange times we now live in, compared to the ones some of us grew up in ...

● United's home crowd of just 23,639 for Saints' League Cup visit was a sign of the times. Crowds in the mid 1980s, as football struggled to recover from the horrors of Heysel and Bradford, were incredibly low compared to today's Premier League era. For example, on the same night United played Saints, Arsenal attracted a crowd of only 21,604 for Manchester City's visit while Liverpool v Leicester was watched by 20,248. Only 15,532 watched Tottenham defeat Birmingham City.

Saints: Shilton, Forrest, Dennis, Case, Wright, Gittens, Lawrence, Cockerill, Clarke, Baker, Wallace (Le Tissier).

United: Turner, Duxbury, Albiston, Whiteside (Wood), McGrath, Hogg, Moses, Olsen, Stapleton, Davenport, Gibson (Moran).

Played for both finalists

from facing page

McCalliog started the 1974/75 season as a United regular but was sold in February 1975 to Saints for £40,000.

The player would go on to write his name into Saints folklore by providing the pass for Bobby Stokes to score the winner in the following year's FA Cup final against his former employers.

In the quarter final, he had struck the only goal at fourth tier Bradford City.

McCalliog played 72 games for Saints and scored eight goals before losing his place in January 1977 to new signing Alan Ball. He left at the end of the season to play in the North American Soccer League for Chicago Sting.

Ted MacDougall

A prolific scorer for AFC Bournemouth, MacDougall won a dream move to Old Trafford in September 1972 for a fee of almost £200,000.

He was to only play 18 times for United, though, with one of his four goals coming in a 2-1 win against Saints two months later.

Signing for Saints from Norwich for £50,000 in 1976, MacDougall was top scorer in his first season, 1976/77 - hitting 23 goals in 36 Second Division appearances.



Ted MacDougall

Reunited up front with former Cherries strike partner Phil Boyer, MacDougall contributed 14 more goals as Saints win promotion to the top flight in 1977/78.

Despite five goals in the first 10 games of the 1978/79 First Division season, MacDougall told boss Lawrie McMenemy he no longer felt able to cut it at the highest level and was allowed to return to Cherries.

Danny Wallace

Handed his debut by Lawrie McMenemy as a 16-year-old at Old Trafford in November 1980, the winger moved there permanently for £1.3m almost nine years later.

His best days, without a doubt, were in Saints' colours.

He netted 64 goals in 253 appearances for the club, including 11 in the First Division when Saints finished runners-up to Liverpool in 1984. While at United, he scored 11 goals in 71 appearances - helping the club win the 1990 FA Cup. He was a non playing sub when they won the European Cup Winners Cup 12 months later.

The emergence of first Lee Sharpe and then Ryan Giggs greatly reduced Wallace's chances, and he left to join Birmingham in October 1993 for £400,000.

Continued on next page

Played for both finalists

from page 13

Three years later he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and he was forced to retire from football.

In 2006, he completed the London Marathon in five-and-a-half days.

Joe Jordan

Signed by United for £350,000 in early 1978 from Leeds United, the Scottish international striker was to score 41 goals in 126 appearances for the club.

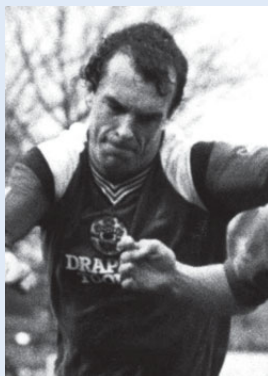
He left Old Trafford in the summer of 1981, AC Milan signing him for £325,000. Three years later, aged 32, he returned to England to sign for Saints for £150,000. There he was top scorer in his first season, 1984/85, with 12 league goals as Saints finished fifth. He moved onto Bristol City in 1987.

Mark Hughes

A legend at Old Trafford for his 120 goals in 354 appearances over two spells.

Anything but a legend at Saints, where he made 60 appearances after a £650,000 move from Chelsea in the summer of 1998 and only scored twice.

A far cry from his early days at United where he struck 24 league and cup goals in his second full season, 1984/85, before netting 17 in the



Joe Jordan

league the following season.

That form won him a £2.5m move to Barcelona in the summer of 1986, but he returned to Old Trafford two years later for £1.5m.

He struck 21 times in all competitions in 1990/91, including two in the European Cup Winners Cup final win against Barcelona, and added 22 more in 1993/94 when United won the double for the first time.

He moved to Chelsea in 1995 and onto Saints three years later.

Andrei Kanchelskii

A flying winger at Old Trafford between 1991-1996 - where he scored 36 goals in 161 appearances - Kanchelskii was given a one-year Saints contract by Gordon Strachan ahead of the 2002/03 season.

The Russian only appeared in one league game, against Everton as a sub, before leaving in the first ever January transfer window to join Saudi Arabians Al-Hilal on a free.

Danny Higginbotham

Only made seven first team appearances for United after coming through the ranks at Old Trafford, prior to moving to Derby. Signed for Saints in the January 2003 transfer window for £1.5m.

Continued on facing page



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Saints don't lack

By Cameron Earley

MANCHESTER United possess a squad crammed full of household names.

Jose Mourinho's men have hoovered up a host of medals at home and abroad during their careers.

It is a given fact that most members of the United squad possess experience of a big occasion.

But most of Claude Puel's men are hardly novices when it comes to major cup finals.

Indeed, he can call on players who have won international tournaments as well as domestic silverware.

Just look at this list for proof ...

Fraser Forster

The giant goalkeeper appeared in three finals during his time with Glasgow Celtic.

He was on the losing side in the 2010/11 Scottish League Cup final - current colleague Steven Davis among the Rangers scorers in their 2-1 win.

But he lifted the Scottish Cup later that same season and repeated the feat in 2012/13.

Cedric Soares

Will be the only reigning European Championship winner at Wembley this weekend, following Portugal's success against Paul Pogba's France last summer.

Prior to that, he had twice won the Portuguese Cup final - with Academica in 2012 and with Sporting Lisbon in 2015.

He might not possess great memories of that second win, however - he was sent off in only the 14th minute, Sporting holding on to draw 2-2 with Braga before winning on penalties.

Maya Yoshida

Was in the Japan side that won the 2011 Asian Cup final. Ex-Saint Tadanari Lee scored Japan's extra time winner in a 1-0 success against Australia.

Ryan Bertrand

Famously made his European debut for Chelsea in the 2011/12 Champions League final against Bayern Munich in Munich. Bertrand played the first 73 minutes in left midfield before being substituted.

Florin Gardos

Unlikely to play at Wembley - after only one first team appearance in two years - but in 2010/11 he helped Steaua Bucharest win the Romanian Cup.



Ryan Bertrand has played in a Champions League final for Chelsea.

Steven Davis

The most decorated Saint in terms of cup winners finals, with five.

All were won during his time with Glasgow Rangers.

He came on as a 75th minute sub in the 2007/08 Scottish Cup final win over Queen of the South 2.

The same season he played the entire two hours and scored a penalty in the shoot-out as Rang-

ers beat Dundee United on penalties in the Scottish League Cup final.

In 2008/09, Davis again won the Scottish Cup and in 2009/10 he was part of the Rangers side that won the Scottish League Cup (though he was subbed off at half-time).

The Northern Ireland captain scored the opener in Rangers' 2-1 Scottish League Cup final win over arch rivals Celtic in 2010/11.

Davis was part of the Rangers side that reached the 2007/08 UEFA Cup final, where they were beaten 2-0 by Zenit St Petersburg.

Jay Rodriguez

Was a Wembley winner with Burnley in the 2008/09 Championship play off final. Came on as a 73rd minute sub in a game decided by Saints fan Wade Elliott's goal against Sheffield United.

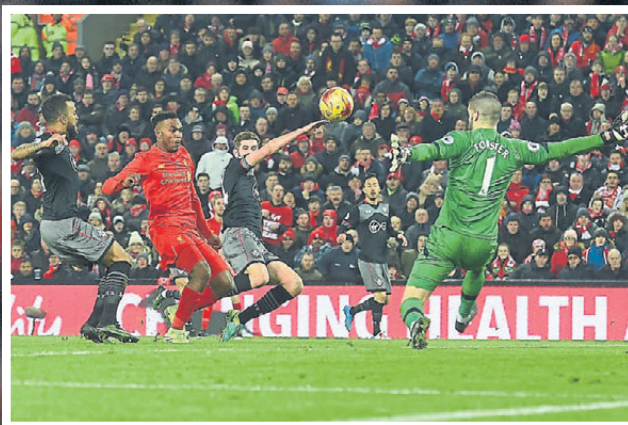

Saints v Manchester United

Wembley, League Cup final 2017

final experience



Steven Davis, main picture, and Fraser Forster, above, have huge amounts of cup final experience from their time in Glasgow with Rangers and Celtic respectively.



James Ward-Prowse, Nathan Redmond and Jack Stephens were in the England U21 squad that won last summer's Toulon Trophy.

Dusan Tadic

Still waiting for his first cup final winners' medal. Was twice a losing finalist in the Serbian Cup for Vojvodina in both 2006/07 and 2009/10.

Oriol Romeu

Was an unused sub when Chelsea won the 2011/12 Champions League final on penalties against Bayern Munich.

James Ward-Prowse

Never played in a final for his club, but last summer skipped England under-21s in their Toulon Tournament final success against the host nation.

Nathan Redmond

One of only two current Saints to have scored at Wembley. He netted Norwich City's second goal in their 2-0 win over Mid-

dlesbrough in the 2014/15 Championship play off final.

Redmond was also in the England under-21 side that won the Toulon Tournament last summer.

Jack Stephens

Came on as a late sub in England under-21's Toulon Trophy success last summer.

Sofiane Boufal

One of Boufal's last games for

Lille was last season's French League Cup final against a Paris St Germain side containing Zlatan Ibrahimovic. The Swede didn't score as Paris SG, despite being reduced to ten men 20 minutes from time, won 2-1.

Manolo Gabbiadini

The new Saints striker's only final experience was a second half sub for Italy under-21s in their 2015 European U21 Championship final loss to Spain.

Pierre Hojbjerg

Played the whole 90 minutes and 12 minutes of extra time for Bayern Munich in the 2013/14 German Cup final against Borussia Dortmund 0.

2013 FIFA Club World Cup Final- Bayern Munich 2 Raja Casablanca 0- Hojbjerg unused sub.

Lloyd Isgrove

The only member of Claude Puel's squad who has won THREE Wembley finals.

Isgrove, who is unlikely to face Manchester United, first appeared at the stadium when he helped Peterborough win the 2013/14 Football League Trophy. On loan at the time, he came on as a late sub in Posh's 3-1 win over Chesterfield.

Last season, he twice more appeared on the winning side at Wembley.

On loan to Barnsley, he played the entire 90 minutes in his second Football League Trophy victory - a 3-2 win over Oxford United.

A few months later, he was back and scoring in Barnsley's 3-1 League 1 play-off final success against Millwall.

Harrison Reed

The midfielder helped Saints win the 2014/15 Under-21 Premier League Cup. He appeared in both legs of the final victory over Blackburn, being sent off in the second leg at St Mary's in the closing stages of Saints' 2-1 success.

Sam McQueen

The left back helped Saints win the 2014/15 Under-21 Premier League Cup.

Josh Sims

The youngster who set up Shane Long's semi final second leg winner at Anfield also helped Saints win the 2014/15 Under-21 Premier League Cup.

● Matt Targett and Jake Hesketh, both currently injured, also appeared for Saints in that tournament success.

Played for both finalists

from facing page

Made 94 appearances for Saints before leaving to join Stoke in August 2006 for £225,000. Aged 34, and playing for non league Chester at the time, Higginbotham made his international debut in 2013 for Gibraltar.

Morgan Schneiderlin

Little did they know it at the time, but Saints had a bargain when they paid French club Strasbourg £1.2m for an 18-year-old Schneiderlin in the summer of 2008.

He went on to become a key member of the club's rise from the depths of League 1 to the top seven of the Premier League, making 261 appearances in all competitions.

After three seasons as a Premier League regular with Saints, he moved to Manchester United for £25m in the summer of 2015.

Jose Mourinho's arrival last summer saw him fall out of first team favour, and last month he jumped at the chance to be reunited with his former Saints boss Ronald Koeman at Everton.

At £20m, he was the most expensive signing in the January transfer window.

Luke Shaw

The left back was only 17 when Nigel Adkins threw him in for his Premier



Morgan Schneiderlin.

League debut in November 2012.

But he never looked out of place and in March 2014, aged 18, made his senior England debut.

He went to that summer's World Cup and appeared in the draw with Costa Rica.

On his return to Saints, and after 60 league appearances for the club, he moved to Old Trafford for a whopping £27m.

That made him one of world football's most expensive teenagers.

In his two and a half seasons at United, Shaw has been restricted to just 28 league appearances.

He missed most of the 2015/16 season with a badly broken leg suffered in a Champions League fixture.

Still only 21, he has also struggled for regular football under Jose Mourinho and has little chance of featuring against his former club at Wembley.

● Alan McLoughlin was a trainee at Old Trafford who left without ever playing a first team game. McLoughlin became Saints' first £1m signing in December 1990 when he moved from Swindon. He only made 27 appearances, however, and within two years had moved to Pompey for £400,000.

Manchester United's list of business partners ...

Global Partners

Adidas - Official kit supplier
Aon - Principal Partner
Chevrolet - Principal Partner
20th Century Fox- Official Feature Film Partner
Abengoa - Official Sustainable Technology Partner
Aeroflot - Official Carrier
Aperol Spritz - Official Global Spirits Partner
Apollo Tyres - Official Tyre Partner
Casillero del Diablo - Official Wine Partner
Columbia - Official Outdoor Apparel Partner
Deezer - Official Music Partner
DHL - Official logistics Partner
EA Sports - Official Football Video Gaming Partner
Epson - Official Office Equipment Partner
Gulf Oil International - Official Global Lubricant Oil and Fuel Retail Partner
HCL - Official Digital Transformation Partner
Kansai Paint - Official Paint Partner
Marathonbet - Official Global



Juan Mata in his Chevrolet-sponsored home shirt.

Betting Partner
Milly - Official Global Mattress and Pillow Partner
New Era - Official Leisure Headwear Partner
Nissin Foods Group - Official Global Noodle Partner
Swissquote - Official Forex and Online Financial Trading Partner
Tag Heuer - Official Timekeeper and Global Watch Partner
Toshiba Medical Systems - Official Medical Systems Partner
Uber - Official Global Partner
Yanmar - Official Global Partner

Regional Partners

A.P Honda- Official Motorcycle Partner
CHI- Official Soft Drinks Partner for Nigeria
Cho-A Pharm Co Ltd. - Official Pharmaceutical Partner for Korea and Vietnam
Donaco - Official Casino Resort Partner for Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and South Korea
Eurofood - Official Confectionery Partner for Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar
The Hong Kong Jockey Club - Official Partner
IVC - Official Wellness Partner
Manda - Official Nutritional Supplements Partner for Japan

Continued on facing page



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

A huge money-

By Simon Carter



SAINTS are not just playing a rival Premier League team in the 2016/17 League Cup final at Wembley.

No, they are playing the richest football club in the world, a remarkable money-making machine.

A club where a dip in on-field fortunes has contrasted with a huge increase in (further) strengthening their financial muscles.

Manchester United were recently unveiled as the world's richest club when Deloitte published their 20th annual money league report.

In 2015/16, the club raked in £515m (689m Euros) - despite failing to progress from the group stages of the lucrative Champions League and not even making the quarter finals of the Europa League.

That was a huge leap on their £395.2m income in 2014/15, and more than double their income of just four years earlier. In 2011/12, United's income was 312m euros.

Barcelona were second with £463.8m - virtually the same figure as third-placed Real Madrid.

Saints were 22nd, with around £120m - almost £400m less than their League Cup final opponents banked.

In the 20 years of Deloitte's reports, United have only ever once been out of the top three - and they have always been the highest earning English club.

In 2015/16, United received £102m in matchday income - the highest in the world.

They also banked £140m in broadcast income.

The most startling figure, though, was the club's commercial income.

Incredibly, United earnt £272.1m in that sphere in 2015/16 - again, the highest in the world.

By way of contrast, Saints' matchday income in 2014/15 - the last season for which figures are available - was £18.2m.

That same season, Saints' broadcasting figure was £84m and their commercial income was just over £7m.

In other words, the club's commercial income in 2014/15 was less than three per cent of United's in 2015/16.

That is a sobering thought indeed, and shows just how hard it is for clubs of Saints' stature to try and break into the Premier League's elite group.

Let's turn the clock back to the early 1990s.

The top flight clubs voted to join

Manchester United's huge wealth allows them to bring in superstar names such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Paul Pogba,

Manolo Gabbiadini and Nathan Redmond, bottom, cost Saints around £26m between them - not even a third of what United splashed out to bring Paul Pogba back to Old Trafford.



a new Premier League because they wanted a greater slice of television money.

In a nutshell, the breakaway from the Football League was orchestrated by greed.

Surely, though, no-one at Old Trafford ever presumed for one moment that the club would become such a financial behemoth.

Here is an amazing fact - when

United won the first ever Premier League title in 1992/93, their winners' cheque was £815,210.

Leicester last season banked £24.84m for coming top, while United picked up £19.8m for finishing fifth.

Aston Villa picked up £1.2m for finishing bottom - around £400,000 more than United banked for winning the title in 1993.

In total contrast, Nottingham Forest finished bottom at the end of the 22-club 1992-93 campaign and got just £37,055. Managers these days are fined more than that for criticising referees.

In 1992/93, the 22 clubs shared £9.3m worth of prize money with regards to league placings - an average of around £440,000 per club.

Last season 20 clubs shared


Saints v Manchester United

Wembley, League Cup final 2017

making machine


Wayne Rooney

£215m in the same season).

In 1999 Saints' turnover rose slightly to £15.6m and in 2000 it had risen again, to £20.8m. Within 16 years, they would earn three times that much just from television income.

In 2008/09, the season which saw the club relegated to the third tier and with parent club Southampton Leisure Holdings in administration, the club's entire income was only £8.8m.

In the first year after Markus Liebherr's takeover, and despite Saints playing in League 1, the club's income rose to £14.281m.

By the time Saints returned to the top flight and began furiously milking Rupert Murdoch's cash cow again, the financial benefits were more than obvious.

The club's 2012/13 turnover, on their return to the Premier League, was £71.8m. That rose again in 2013/14 to £106.1m, and again to £113.7m in 2014/15.

That is not a bad increase, is it? From a turnover of £8.85m in 2008/09 to one of £113.7m just six years later!

In terms of a percentage rise - around 1,184 per cent - that is a figure surely unequalled in world sport, certainly at elite level.

Last year, 2016/17, Saints banked £84m in league prize money and television income alone.

That is a huge sum indeed. But every Premier League club earned virtually the same amount of television cash last term.

It is United's matchday income and commercial income that sets them apart from Saints and every other club in the world.

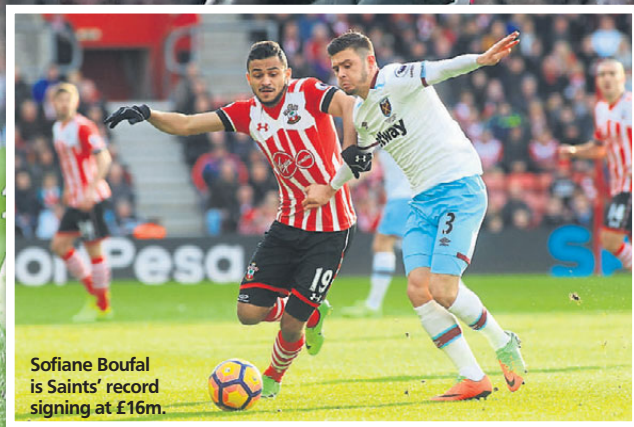
That is why they can pay players like Paul Pogba, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Wayne Rooney eye-watering salaries of upwards of £200,000 a week.

Saints cannot compete with that, of course. Who can?

For 90 minutes at Wembley, though, the playing field will thankfully be a lot more level.

It's 11 x 11, and Saints - financial paupers in some way compared to United - have far more of a chance than the respective bank balances would suggest.

That is the beauty of football.



Sofiane Boufal
is Saints' record
signing at £16m.

£261m - the average per club now £13m.

That startling contrast alone shows how the rich have grown richer, and the new television deal that kicked in this season will pour many more millions into the elite's coffers.

The three-year deal that started last summer is worth £5.13 billion over three years - compared to

£191m for the first FIVE years of the Premier League, 1992-97.

Of course, Saints have also grown richer thanks to the Premier League.

In 1997/98, the club's entire turnover was just £14.8m - and that was a dramatic rise on just £6.3m in 1996/97.

Matchday income in 1997/98 was £4m and television income

was around £6m.

Compare that to 2015/16, when Saints banked over £60m from television deals - £29.4m from overseas deals, almost £22m from domestic deals and just under £11m from having a selection of their games shown live.

Saints' wage bill in 1997/98 was just £4.6m. In 2014/15 it was almost £69m (compared to United's

Manchester United's list of business partners ...

from facing page

Nexon - Official Social Football Gaming Partner for Japan
Uni President - Official Soft Drinks Partner for China and Taiwan
YOU.C1000 - Official Isotonic Drinks Partner for Indonesia

Media Partners-
Bakcell - Official Integrated Telecommunications Partner for Azerbaijan

Globacom - Official Integrated Telecommunications Partner for Nigeria, Ghana, Republic of Benin

PCCW - Official Integrated Telecommunications Partner and Official Broadcast Partner for Hong Kong

Sina Sports - Official MUTV Broadcast Partner for China
Sky TV NZ - Official MUTV Broadcast Partner for New Zealand

STC - Official Integrated Telecommunications Partner for Saudi Arabia

TM- Official Integrated Telecommunications Partner for Malaysia

TV 2 - Official MUTV Broadcast Partner for Norway

VIVA- Official Integrated Telecommunications Partner for Bahrain and Kuwait

Financial Partners-
AFB - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Kenya, Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Tanzania

Banif Bank - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Malta
BIDV - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Vietnam

Commercial Bank of Qatar - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Qatar

Danamon - Official Consumer Banking Partner for Indonesia

DenizBank - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Turkey
Emirates NBD - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for the UAE

Eurobank - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Serbia
Inveco Banco - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Mexico

Krungsri - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Thailand

Maybank - Official Retail Banking Partner for Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines.

Santander - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Norway

Shinsei - Official Financial Services Affinity Partner for Japan
Virgin Money - Official Financial Services Partner in the UK

Manchester United's home grown players 1999-2017

1999/00 (players who appeared this season who had come through the club's youth system)

David Beckham, Nicky Butt, Luke Chadwick, Michael Clegg, Nick Culkin, Ritchie Wellens, Jordan Curtis, Ryan Giggs, David Healy, Danny Higginbotham, Phil Neville, Gary Neville, Mark Wilson, Paul Rachubka, Paul Scholes, Michael Twiss, Ronnie Wallwork

2000/01

Wes Brown, Michael Steward, Danny Webber

2001/02

Jimmy Davis, Lee Roche

2002/03

Darren Fletcher, Kieron Richardson, Danny Pugh, Mads Timm

2003/04

Phil Bardsley, Chris Eagles, Eddie Johnson, Paul Tierney

2004/05

Sylvan Ebanks-Blake, David Jones

2005/06

Adam Eckersley, Darron Gibson, Ritchie Jones

2006/07

Michael Barnes, David Gray, Kieran Lee, Phil Marsh, Ryan Shawcross



A young David Beckham

2007/08

Fraizer Campbell, Jonny Evans, Danny Simpson

2008/09

Ben Amos, James Chester, Federico Macheda

2009/10

Danny Welbeck

2010/11

Ravel Morrison

2011/12

Tom Cleverley, Larnell Cole, Zeki Fryers, Michael Keane, Will Keane, Paul Pogba

2012/13

Robbie Brady, Scott Wootton

2013/14

Tom Lawrence, James Wilson, Adnan Januzaj

2014/15

Tyler Blackett, Paddy McNair, Andreas Pereira, Tom Thorpe, Jesse Lingard, Reece James, Saidy Janko

2015/16

Cameron Borthwick-Jackson, Timothy Fosu-Mensah, Donald Love, Marcus Rashford, Joe Riley, James Weir

2016/17

Alex Tuanzebe

**Saints v Manchester United****Wembley, League Cup final 2017**

Truly amazing

By Simon Carter



THOSE who champion youth development will no doubt be pleased to see Saints and Manchester United going head to head at Wembley this weekend.

For the two clubs have done more than most to produce their own home-grown talent, rather than just buy in new players from Britain and abroad with no thought to their own infrastructure.

The Sports Pink has looked back at the statistics, and they made fascinating reading.

We could have delved right back into history, but instead have decided to keep it fairly recent.

We have looked at all the home-grown players who have played for both clubs since the start of the 1999/2000 season.

Since the start of that season, 11 home-grown Saints have played international football.

Wayne Bridge, Theo Walcott, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Adam Lallana, Luke Shaw and Calum Chambers would go on and win senior England caps.

Chris Baird, Alan Blayney and Ben Reeves would win Northern Ireland caps, while Gareth Bale would become a Welsh legend.

The eleventh player, Portsmouth-born Jake Thomson, appeared twice for Trinidad & Tobago in 2009.

Eleven internationals is an impressive record, no doubt about it.

Staggering

And here's an interesting fact. The last time Saints played a competitive game without an academy player or academy graduate in their matchday squad was in March 2012.

On that occasion, a Rickie Lambert volley and a masterclass in goalkeeping from Kelvin Davis gave Nigel Adkins' men a 1-0 Championship win at Leeds.

Since then, Saints have played 228 first team games in all competitions.

Some might say that's a staggering statistic.

Indeed it might be, but it's nothing compared to Manchester United's record.

The last time United played a first team game without a home-grown player in the matchday squad was in October 1937.

You read that right. October 1937.

Since then, the club have played 3,845 matches.

It is a truly mind-blowing fact, and bear in mind until 1965 clubs didn't even have the option of



James Ward Prowse, main picture, and fellow Saints academy graduates Gareth Bale (top), Luke Shaw (left), Theo Walcott (below left) and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (below),

fielding a single substitute.

Even then, clubs could only name one sub for the whole of the 1970s and most of the 1980s.

Gradually, the amount of subs allowed has risen - in 1995 it was increased to five and to seven from the 2008/09 season.

Since the start of the 1999/2000 season, the Echo can reveal that 50 home-grown players have ap-

peared for Saints in a competitive game.

We have not included players who were 16 or 17 when Saints signed them from other professional clubs.

That rules out Dexter Blackstock (Oxford United), David McGoldrick (Notts County), Jack Stephens (Plymouth) and Harry Lewis (Shrewsbury Town).

You could also argue that the likes of Walcott and Lallana were 'bought' in from other clubs rather than initially discovered by Saints.

Walcott was on Swindon's books prior to moving to the Saints academy, while Lallana was originally with AFC Bournemouth.

For the benefit of this article, though, they are included - young



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

youth statistic



enough at the time of joining Saints to be considered 'proper' academy graduates.

Fifty home-grown players since the start of 1999/2000 should be a figure of pride for Southampton FC.

At Old Trafford, the numbers are even higher - 74 home-grown players in the same timeframe.

Of those, around a third have

gone on to win internationals caps.

Another incredible statistic there.

The United academy has always been world famous - right from the days of the Busby Babes through to the class of 1992 which produced Beckham, Scholes, Giggs, Butt and the Nevilles.

In terms of producing their own

players, they are head and shoulders above everyone else.

United's youth team is statistically the most successful in English football, with nine players in the English football Hall of Fame.

They are Duncan Edwards, Sir Bobby Charlton, George Best, Nobby Stiles, Mark Hughes, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes, David Beckham and Johnny Giles.

In addition, United also have the best FA Youth Cup record, winning on 10 occasions out of 14 final appearances.

Saints, in contrast, have only ever reached the final once - in 2005.

Five of United's Youth Cup wins were in the same decade - in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957.

The conveyor belt has rarely looked like slowing up.

Impressively, 12 United academy graduates were selected to represent their countries at last summer's European Championships - more than any other club from Europe's top five leagues.

Marcus Rashford and Burnley goalkeeper Tom Heaton were in England's 23-man party, 2011 FA Youth Cup winner Paul Pogba was the host country's talisman, while the Republic of Ireland's squad included John O'Shea and Robbie Brady.

The Northern Ireland squad featured no fewer than six United academy graduates.

Graduate

Only one of them, Paddy McNair, was playing for United at the time. The others were West Brom defender Jonny Evans, Watford defender Craig Cathcart, Blackburn midfielder Corry Evans, Reading's Oliver Norwood, and Doncaster's Luke McCullough.

Cathcart, Corry Evans, Norwood and McCullough left Old Trafford having never made a single first team appearance between them.

The 12th Old Trafford graduate was James Chester, who was in the Welsh squad. He only ever made one senior United appearance.

There were almost 13 graduates in France but England omitted Leicester's Danny Drinkwater, who left United without ever playing a game, from their final 23-man squad.

It has been claimed that current United boss Jose Mourinho has never been hugely interested in promoting young players for the sake of it. His critics have viewed him as a 'gun for hire' brought in purely to concentrate on the first team and to collect trophies.

Whether that is fair criticism or not, he has given just one academy graduate his debut this season - Alex Tuanzebe.

Though born in Congo in Africa, Tuanzebe has been associated with United's academy since he was eight.

It's fair to say there won't be many academy graduates in Mourinho's matchday squad for Wembley. Paul Pogba will be there, though, so United's amazing record - over 3,800 games - will carry on.

Saints' home grown players 1999-2017

1999/00 (players who appeared this season who had come through the club's youth system)

Francis Benali, Shayne Bradley, Wayne Bridge, Matt Le Tissier

2000/01

Ryan Ashford, Kevin Gibbens

2001/02

Chris Baird

2002/03

Martin Craine
Alan Blayney

2005/06

Gareth Bale
Nathan Dyer
Simon Gillett
Matthew Mills
Andrew Surman
Theo Walcott

2006/07

Adam Lallana

2007/08

Cedric Baseya

2008/09

Oscar Gobern
Lloyd James
Olly Lancashire
Kayne McLaggan
Joseph Mills
Matt Paterson



Adam Lallana

Jake Thomson
Jamie White

2009/10

Callum McNish
Joseph Mills
Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain

2011/12

Ryan Doble
Sam Hoskins
Ben Reeves
Luke Shaw
James Ward-Prowse

2012/13

Calum Chambers
Andy Robinson
Lloyd Isgrove

2013/14

Sam McQueen
Harrison Reed
Jake Sinclair
Matt Targett
Omar Rowe

2014/15

Dominic Gape
Jake Hesketh
Ryan Seager
Jason McCarthy

2016/17

Olufela Olomola
Josh Sims

Mourinho v Saints record

JOSE Mourinho will enter the League Cup final defending a good personal record against Saints.

He has only lost one of his eight games against the club, winning five of the others.

In those five wins, Saints had led in the first minute in TWO of them!

He has also picked up two large suspensions for criticising referees - strangely enough, in two of the three games his side did not win ...

This is Mourinho's record against Saints.

2004/05

Chelsea 2 Saints 1
James Beattie scored at both ends before Frank Lampard struck a penalty winner four minutes before half-time.

Beattie gave Steve Wigley's Saints a first minute lead, before his own goal levelled matters on 34 minutes.

Saints 1 Chelsea 3
Chelsea took another step towards the Premier League title in Mourinho's first season at Stamford Bridge.

Frank Lampard and Eidur Gudjohnsen put the Blues in control at half-time.

Though Kevin Phillips reduced the arrears, Gudjohnsen seven his second seven minutes from time.

2013/14



Jose Mourinho

Chelsea 3 Saints 1
As they had done on their previous visit to the ground in September 2004, Saints took a first minute lead - this time through Jay Rodriguez.

Chelsea had to wait until the 55th minute to level, through Gary Cahill.

Their other centre half, John Terry, put them ahead seven minutes later and Demba Ba added a late third.

Saints 0 Chelsea 3
Mourinho completed his fourth win out of four against Saints.

All the goals - from Fernando Torres, Willian and Oscar 82 - came in the last half hour.

2014/15

Saints 1 Chelsea 1
Sadio Mane put Saints ahead in this encounter which took place three days after Christmas.

Eden Hazard levelled on the stroke of half-time.

Saints played out the last two minutes with ten men after Morgan Schneiderlin was sent off for a second bookable offence.

Mourinho was furious he side were denied a spot-kick and said after there was "a clear campaign" against his side. Anthony Taylor booked Cesc Fabregas for diving, following a challenge by Matt Targett, instead of giving the visitors a penalty.

Cont on facing page



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Remember how good

By Simon Carter



SAINTS are back at Wembley for the first time in almost seven years.

They will be stepping out at the rebuilt national stadium for the second time when they face Manchester United in the League Cup final.

Their previous appearance was in the decidedly lower-key Johnstone's Paint Trophy final against Carlisle in March 2010.

That game had a great ending, though - Alan Pardew's Saints romping to a 4-1 victory.

The day wasn't just about the result, however impressive it was. No, it was more than that.

It was a chance for the club's fans to see the green shoots of recovery following the previous summer's Markus Liebherr-led takeover.

It was a chance for the club to show that, after five years of decline and a very real brush with oblivion, brighter days lay ahead.

This is how the Daily Echo's Adam Leitch reported the big day

THE Johnstone's Paint Trophy may be well down the list of domestic honours teams want to win.

It might even have been fairly low on the list of things Saints set out to achieve when their mega-wealthy new owners arrived.

But yesterday at Wembley it meant the world to the club and, most importantly, the fans.

Wembley was a sea of red and white as the supporters came to celebrate, not so much just a trophy win but the rebirth of their club.

This was the day that signalled Saints were not only alive but heading back to the big time.

There was the sense of anticipation that these famous days, which live so long in the memory of everybody fortunate enough to be there, could be a more common occurrence.

Whether they be play-offs, days where promotion is secured or even in years to come challenging for more major domestic honours, there is hope.

Sometimes last summer all Saints fans had was hope - hope that their club would merely survive.

That's what made Wembley so special.

There were 44,000 Saints fans there to celebrate.

They weren't really celebrating winning the JPT. Instead they were celebrating what it is to be a



Saints celebrate winning the JPT in 2010

Saints fan.

It was marvellous.

In truth, the reaction of the crowd said it all.

They were there to get dressed up in red and white, have a fun day with their family and friends and savour the occasion.

When goals were scored they were not celebrated with even the same zeal as they often are

in league games at St Mary's.

Likewise, the victory was very much welcomed but hardly a cause for a street party.

That's not what the JPT was about for Southampton.

So many fans have watched the fall of the club with horror.

They can put the JPT in perspective - seven years ago Saints were in the FA Cup final and fin-

ishing eighth in the top flight.

But that is history.

This is the road back.

It proved that Saints had no divine right not to have to enter a competition like this.

In the end it provided a terrific day out and something else to put in a trophy cabinet that is mainly full of pendants given to the club from pre-season friendlies.



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

last Wembley visit was?



This may only be the JPT, but it's a stepping stone in the right direction.

The game was won for Saints thanks to two major things – their attacking quartet of Rickie Lambert, Michail Antonio, Papa Waigo and Adam Lallana were too much for

Carlisle to handle while the rest of the team were very solid

and professional.

Alan Pardew's decision to go for the jugular with a 4-4-2 paid off while Greg Abbott, his strike force blighted by injuries, played one up front until they were 4-0 down.

It was easy pickings for Radhi Jaïdi and Jose Fonte.

After a relatively tense opening as both sides tried to find their

feet, Saints were were awarded a penalty.

Antonio stood up a terrific cross from the right and, just as Lambert readied himself to head home from the edge of the six-yard box, Peter Murphy stuck up an arm to block the ball.

Assistant linesman Tony Mason spotted the blatant handball and a penalty was

correctly awarded.

Murphy was lucky to escape with just a yellow card but there was no let off for Carlisle.

Adam Collin committed early to go to his left and got his fingertips to Lambert's

penalty, but it was too powerful and Saints had the lead after just 15 minutes.

They never looked back.

Antonio's long throws caused problems for Carlisle all day with Lambert invariably winning the ball at the near post.

He did just that on 22 minutes, flicking on to Waigo whose touch allowed Lallana to spin and volley from six yards out but straight at

Collin.

The same duo went head to head once more with the keeper again winning out.

Antonio was next up to trouble Collin, this time after Murphy's awful attempted pass was intercepted by Waigo but the Carlisle keeper was strong and turned the ball wide.

Carlisle had their only real period of pressure shortly afterwards with Matty Robson using his pace to threaten down the left.

After his cross led to Graham Kavanagh's shot being blocked, a deep corner was chipped back in by Robson to Ian Harte who beat Paul Wotton to the ball to loop a header onto the top of the bar and over.

Marc Bridge-Wilkinson kept the pressure on, controlling on his thigh and volleying just over on 37 minutes before Saints made their lead commanding a minute before half time.

It was via the long throw route, Antonio's lob in from the right again flicked on at the near post by Lambert for Lallana to ghost through the Carlisle backline to head home totally unmarked from six yards out.

The only danger for Saints was if Carlisle stuck two up front at half-time and got themselves an early goal and a foothold in the game.

Instead the match ended as a contest just four minutes after the restart when Saints added another.

Waigo started the move with a neat one-two that set Lambert away down the left.

He crossed into the box where Evan Horwood took a ridiculous chance, trying to turn out on to his left foot rather than just clearing, only for the ball to bounce off him and allow Antonio the chance to shoot.

His fierce drive was parried by Collin but Waigo was on hand to head into the empty net.

Continued on page 22

Mourinho v Saints record

from facing page

That was a decision Mourinho labelled a "scandal".

For his comments, the Football Association fined him £50,000 – one of a handful of large fines they have given the Portuguese during his time in England.

Chelsea 1 Saints 1

Ronald Koeman again took a point off his former Barcelona colleague.

Diego Costa put Chelsea into an 11th minute lead, but Dusan Tadic levelled from the spot eight minutes later.

Chelsea went on to win the title for the third time under Mourinho.

2015/16

Chelsea 1 Saints 3

Finally, Saints broke their Mourinho duck at the seventh time of asking.

They came from behind to do so, after Willian had put Chelsea ahead in the 10th minute.

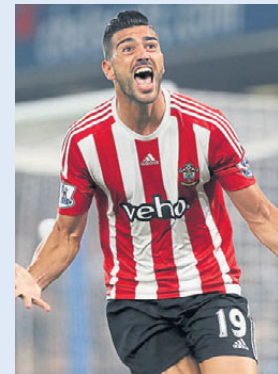
Steven Davis levelled shortly before half-time and Sadio Mane put Saints in front on the hour mark.

Graziano Pelle wrapped up a memorable win 18 minutes from time.

Again, Mourinho felt hard done by with regards to key decisions.

Mourinho criticised the officials after the defeat, saying they were 'afraid to give decisions for Chelsea'.

As part of a bizarre seven-minute rant to television cameras, he said referees



Pelle scores at Chelsea

were 'afraid to give decisions for Chelsea.'

He was unhappy that Radamel Falcao was booked for diving with the score at 1-1, when Mourinho felt he should have been awarded a penalty.

Mourinho was subsequently charged with misconduct in relation to his comments, and fined £50,000.

2016/17

Man United 2 Saints 0

Zlatan Ibrahimovic ensured Mourinho celebrated his competitive home debut as United manager with three points at Old Trafford last August.

On what was his home debut as well, the Swedish striker struck after 36 minutes and added a penalty seven minutes into the second half.

That left Mourinho having won five, drawn two and lost just one of his eight games against Saints. In those eight games Saints have scored eight times and conceded 16.

Puel's record v Man United

CLAUDE Puel will be hoping to claim the second win of his managerial career against Manchester United at Wembley.

If he does, it will come 11 and a half years after his first and so far only success.

Puel was managing Lille when they were paired with Sir Alex Ferguson's men in the 2005/06 Champions League group stages.

Puel certainly had the upper hand on Sir Alex - overseeing a 0-0 bore draw at Old Trafford and then beating United - containing Ronaldo and Rooney - 1-0 in France.

After Lille's own stadium had failed to pass UEFA grading rules, they were forced to switch the tie to the Stade de France - over 100 miles away in Paris.

Despite that, around 66,400 turned out - a record attendance for any French club in a European tie.

That was to be Lille's only win in the group as Puel's side finished second bottom. United were bottom, for the first time ever in a Champions League group.

The winner in the Stade de France was also the only goal a Puel team has scored against United in five attempts.

Puel and Ferguson went head to head in the Champions League again the following season, 2006/07.

And this time there was huge drama in the round of 32 first leg tie in France.

Ryan Giggs' late winner for the



Claude Puel.

visitors almost sparked a walk-out from angry Lille players at the climax of a controversial clash.

Giggs curled in a quick free-kick after 83 minutes while Lille were still assembling their defensive wall.

Lille players, furious that an earlier header by Peter Odemwingie had been ruled out, walked off the pitch as the last 16 first leg clash boiled over.

They eventually returned, and United held on for a crucial victory.

Lille president Michel Seydoux said his players did not walk off the pitch in order to get the game abandoned.

However, Ferguson branded Lille a "disgrace" and called on UEFA to intervene.

Interview: Man Utd boss Sir Alex Ferguson

"I have never seen that before in all my years in football," said Ferguson.

"That is a disgrace and Uefa have to do something about that because it was pure intimidation of the referee.

"The Lille staff encouraged their players to come off and that made it a hostile atmosphere inside the ground. It's a disgrace.

"Uefa will have to come down on it. They have to.

"It was very worrying because they were throwing missiles and Gary Neville got hit by something."

Continued on facing page



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Flashback to the

from page 21

Adam Clayton briefly threatened but could only slash wide from a decent position before Saints made it 4-0 on the hour mark.

Kelvin Davis' long clearance was flicked on by Lambert, Lallana challenged for the next header on the edge of the area and the ball dropped to Antonio just outside the box.

He controlled on his thigh and lashed a left-footed volley that flew past the keeper.

At that stage Carlisle boss Abbott did put two men up front but the game was already lost.

Joe Anyinsah sliced wide before Lallana's shot from the edge of the area was inadvertently blocked by Waigo.

Gary Madine got a consolation with six minutes remaining, his flicked header from Harte's free kick fair reward for the Cumbrians who never gave up and always worked hard despite being torn to shreds at times.

There were some late chances, Lambert's long-range free kick and Simon Gillett's low near post shot both saved by Collin.

At the other end, Davis blocked at close range with his knee from Scott Dobie.

But this was a day that belonged to Saints.

It belonged to Alan Pardew, to the players, to the new owners, but most especially to the fans.

The bad times are over, roll on the good times.

Lambert's goal was the 32nd of his sensational first season with Saints.

He spoke to the Daily Echo after the Wembley win, and this is how the newspaper reported his quotes the following day ...

RICKIE Lambert said his goal at Wembley may end up being the most memorable of his career - but he is hoping it won't.

Clutching his man of the match award after the 4-1 win against Carlisle, the 32-goal striker hailed it a "perfect day".

Lambert opened the scoring, firing in a 15th minute penalty to send Saints on the route to Johnstone's Paint Trophy glory.

"It was amazing," he said. "I felt nervous obviously taking the pen, but I was confident I could score.

"I've never scored at Wembley before or in a major final like that, so it's up there with the best.

"Maybe in years to come it will be my most memorable.

"I'm hoping not, because I'm hoping there will still be more to come and more major finals."

Lambert, who played for Bristol Rovers in the 2007 JPT final



Rickie Lambert fires Saints ahead from the penalty spot in the 2010 JPT final at Wembley.

against Doncaster at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, was taken aback by the atmosphere when he scored.

"It was unbelievable, I can't describe it," he said.

"I was trying to get to the fans, but the players wouldn't let me.

"I knew where my family was as well, so I was trying to get to them.

"In front of them and in front of 44,000 fans it's absolutely brilliant.

"It went perfect today for myself."

But Lambert admitted he was concerned for the first few minutes as Carlisle applied some pressure.

"We did dominate, but they had the better start and I was a bit worried," he said.

"But the defence stayed solid and after 15 or 20 minutes we started slowly coming into it and we got the first goal, which was the most important one.

"After then we just dominated."

Lambert has now made two Wembley appearances in his career, with a 100 per cent record.

He was part of the Rovers side that won promotion to League One through the play-offs in 2006/07.

Lambert revealed he had made a point of taking in he day on this occasion - something he didn't do on his last visit when Rovers beat Shrewsbury 3-1.

"I can remember it a lot more than I did last time," he said.

"Last time I was just made up and didn't really take it in.

"But I took everything in and I took a few scarves off the fans, shook everyone's hands and took


Saints v Manchester United

Wembley, League Cup final 2017

last Wembley win



Saints fans in good spirits ahead of the 2010 JPT final.

in as much of it as I could.

"It was absolutely brilliant.

"It was lucky we were 4-0 up and we'd won the game, so I had it in my head I was going to enjoy it more now and going to take more things in.

"I've done that - I'll take a lot more away from this final than I did last."

● Lambert's post-Wembley wish came true - there were many more memorable goals to come for Saints.

There were the goals that took

Saints into the Championship, and the goals - including four hat-tricks in 2011/12 - that propelled them into the Premier League.

Then there were his top flight goals for the club, including one on his Premier League debut at defending champions Manchester City on the opening day of 2012/13.

There were no more cup finals, though.

Another of Saints' Wembley goalscorers, Adam Lallana, also spoke to the Daily Echo. This is

how the newspaper reported his quotes ...

ADAM Lallana believes Saints' Johnstone's Paint Trophy win was payback for the fans who have stuck with them through some very hard times.

The 21-year-old was one of the heroes of the day at Wembley, scoring the second in Saints' 4-1 win against Carlisle.

But as much as it was a wonderful moment for himself personally, Lallana said it was as much, if not more, for the supporters.

The club's academy product went through a tough period, along with everyone else, last season.

Administration was followed by relegation from the Championship - the club's second demotion in five seasons.

But, despite the club's future being in jeopardy, Lallana was amazed at the support from the fans.

He hopes yesterday's piece of silverware will go some way to repaying them.

"It was quality, it was a chance to give it back to all the fans," he said. "We had a bleak season last year and to reach a cup final and get a medal by the end of March is brilliant.

"Now we've just got to kick on. "We've got big league games coming up.

"We've got to be professional in how we go about our business.

"But anything's possible, so it's brilliant."

He added: "It just makes it all worth it, all the dark days we've had. We've come through it and we've just got to push on upwards now."

Lallana has received fantastic support from his family throughout his career.

He said the win was also for them.

"You're giving a bit back to your family with all the journeys they've done up and down the country and to training, so it's great," he said.

"Most of all I'm just happy to pick up a winners' medal."

Lallana also recalled the point where Saints climbed the steps to the Royal Box to receive the trophy.

"That was a brilliant moment," he said. "There was quite a few steps, I have to say, but after a game like that you don't mind doing it to pick up the trophy.

"It's a moment to savour.

"Whether you play at Wembley once or three or four times you're always going to remember it."

● Lallana has played at Wembley many more times since the JPT final day.

He has stepped out at the national stadium on numerous occasions with England and also contested last season's League Cup final there.

Liverpool last that final to Manchester City - Lallana one of the Reds players to miss in the penalty shoot-out - and also suffered a Europa League final defeat against Sevilla three months later.

As a result, his JPT medal remains the only winners' one of his professional career - and he's not going to add to that with Liverpool this season either!

Puel record v Man United

from facing page

Ferguson ordered his players to stay on the pitch as their Lille counterparts gathered on the touchline.

Ferguson's comments were condemned by Puel, who backed his president in claiming his team were not planning a walk-off.

Puel raged: "I don't know how that man Ferguson can allow himself to comment like that about this. He should have said nothing.

"The team wished to make a complaint about the goal and didn't want to leave the field. They were just making a protest."

Puel was upset that Giggs' winner was allowed to stand.

He said: "It's not logical. The signal the referee gave was not clear for everyone, especially for us.

"I don't understand. We could not express a formal complaint as we could not find a Uefa delegate."

All was peaceful again a fortnight later, though,



Alex Ferguson

following Henrik Larsson's second leg winner at Old Trafford had sealed a 2-0 aggregate win.

Puel shook hands with Ferguson after seeing his side exit the competition and said there was no ill-feeling.

"There is absolutely no problem whatsoever," he said.

"A lot of it has been orchestrated, but it's not a problem for me."

Puel returned to Old Trafford nine years later, taking charge of Saints' 2-0 league loss last August - his second competitive game in charge of the visitors.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored both goals for United that night, taking his tally to seven in his last three league matches against teams managed by Puel.

Last season the Swede struck twice in a 3-0 Paris St Germain win at Puel's Nice, and then hit a hat-trick in a 4-1 home victory.



Saints v Manchester United



Wembley, League Cup final 2017

Great year for Marcus

Saturday marks a year to the day since Marcus Rashford made his Manchester United debut.

Here is a numerical look at the teenager's remarkable first 12 months in senior football.

52

Rashford's appearances for United to date.

15
His United goal tally.

2

Rashford scored twice on both his United debut, against Saints' conquerors FC Midtjylland in the Europa League, and his Premier League bow against Arsenal three days later.

138



Marcus Rashford

Seconds it took Rashford to find the net on his England debut against Australia.

18 years, 209 days

His age when he did so, making him England's youngest goalscorer debutant since 1938. He went on to beat Wayne Rooney's record as the Three Lions' youngest player at a European Championship.

19

He had just 19 senior appearances to his name - 18 for United, one for England - before being called into Roy Hodgson's squad for Euro 2016.

6

England caps to date.

3

Rashford scored a hat-trick after dropping down to the England U21s last September against Norway.

1976 hero Jim Steele's defensive concerns



Jim Steele.

SAINTS legend Jim Steele fears Jose Fonte and Virgil Van Dijk will be missed on EFL Cup final day.

Steele, man of the match when Saints won the FA Cup in 1976, believes central defence is the weak spot as Claude Puel's men prepare to take on a Manchester United side including 24-goal Zlatan Ibrahimovich.

He said: "I'd be over the moon if Saints win and hopefully we can kick ass - but I can't see it."

"I think Puel screwed up with Fonte. Why didn't he play him

in the Europa League games? He should have played every game alongside [Virgil] Van Dijk."

"I'm sure Van Dijk will be going for £40-50m in the summer. We're going to miss them so much, they were brilliant together."

Tremendous

Jack Stephens is likely to continue alongside Maya Yoshida in the absence of long-term injury victim Van Dijk.

"I don't think they can play the

new centre-half (Martin Caceres) as he hasn't played for six months, so it's going to be hard for the young kid," continued Steele.

"The pressure on him will be tremendous."

Like most Saints fans, Steele has not been a fan of the rotation policy this season.

"Whoever is behind it - whether it's Puel or Les Reed - the team has been changed too much."

"In my day I knew where the likes of Stokesy was running."

Giggs: It's crucial we beat Saints

By Simon Peach

Manchester United great Ryan Giggs believes winning the League Cup is crucial for Jose Mourinho's developing side.

United step out at Wembley against Saints on Sunday looking to avenge the FA Cup final defeat of 1976 and, far more importantly, win their first major trophy under the Portuguese.

Last season's FA Cup is the only major success United have tasted since Sir Alex Ferguson's retirement, but things seem to be going in the right direction under Louis van Gaal's successor.

The Red Devils may have grander ambitions than the EFL Cup, but fans' favourite Giggs believes success on Sunday will be hugely influential.

Confidence

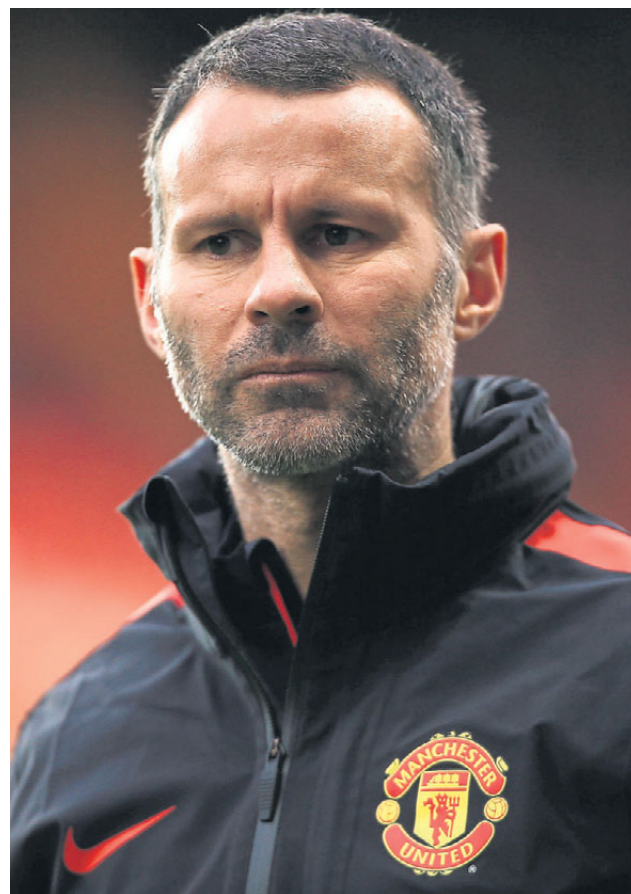
"It is always important to win a trophy," he said.

"This was the first trophy I won and it was the first trophy that Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo won, so it does give players that feeling of what it is like to win something with Manchester United."

"That gives you the confidence to then go on and it sort of takes the pressure off a little bit that you have already won something this season."

"Especially with United going for the fourth place, the FA Cup and the Europa League, it is sort of that little bit of security that you've already won something."

"It doesn't mean that you rest on



20/12/14 PA File Photo of Manchester United's Ryan Giggs during the

your laurels, but it is that sort of little pressure going rather than getting beat in the final and the pressure is like doubled because you might not win anything."

"It is a really important trophy to win, especially this year."

"For most fans, win a trophy and get a Champions League spot this year would be hailed as a suc-

cessful season building for next season."

"We're on track to do that and obviously we're still doing well in the FA Cup and the Europa."

This will be the first major final since joining the club aged 14 that Giggs will watch without being tied to United.

The 43-year-old made a record 963 appearances for the club before becoming assistant manager - a role he left in the summer to pursue a career in management.

Giggs will therefore be watching Sunday's match like a fan and expects Saints to prove stern opposition.

"It won't be easy," he said. "Southampton have proved in the competition that they can produce performances."

Counter-attack

"Obviously they have the two centre-halves missing who have been a big part of things, but still they're an organised team and a team that will counter-attack really quickly."

"It won't be easy. I mean finals are never easy."

"We saw that last year in the FA Cup final when we were losing against Palace, even in the semi-final at Wembley when we had to score late against Everton through Anthony Martial."

"It is not going to be easy but as a United fan obviously I hope we do it."

● Ryan Giggs volunteered for the day at grassroots football club Fishguard Sports AFC to help launch the 2017 McDonald's Community Awards. Nominate any deserving grassroots heroes at www.mcdonalds.co.uk/awards

PINK CHERRIES FOOTBALL

Boruc to blame as Cherries crash

By Sean Taylor

West Brom continue to exceed all expectations this season and remain surprise contenders for European football after beating Bournemouth 2-1 at The Hawthorns.

Expected to struggle, the Baggies are flying high in eighth place in the Premier League and seventh spot may bring qualification for next season's Europa League - a position currently occupied by Everton, who are four points ahead of Tony Pulis' team from as many matches.

Bournemouth took an early lead through Josh King's penalty but goals from defenders Craig Dawson and Gareth McAuley turned the game on its head before half-time as West Brom won at home for the seventh time in the last eight outings.

But it was only possible thanks to a superb injury-time save from Ben Foster to deny Tyrone Mings.

An exciting finale to the game followed a breathless beginning. Mark Clattenburg might have been hoping to keep a low profile in his first game since agreeing to become Saudi Arabia's new head of referees but he was asked to make a big decision after only five minutes when Allan Nyom clumsily brought down Ryan Fraser - and he pointed to the penalty spot.

King confidently tucked away the spot-kick into the bottom corner, sending Foster the wrong way.

There was a chance at either end before West Brom equalised, with Chris Brunt sending a shot into the side-netting for the hosts and Foster helping an Adam Smith effort over the crossbar.

Dawson's deflected strike from the edge of the box brought the Baggies level after 10 minutes as the ball flicked off Charlie Daniels and flew into the roof of the net.

It was West Brom's 35th Premier League goal of the season - one more than they managed to score in the whole of the 2015/16 campaign.

James Morrison saw a deflected shot go narrowly wide before Pulis' side improved on that record by taking the lead in the 22nd minute. Bournemouth goalkeeper Artur Boruc failed to claim a corner, causing a scramble inside the penalty area, and McAuley was on hand to turn the ball in



Gareth McAuley (second right) scores the winner, above, after Artur Boruc, below, missed a corner.



from close range.

It was a nice way for the defender to mark the 500th club appearance of his career but a brave block shortly afterwards to repel a goalbound effort by Jack Wilshere may have pleased him more.

Boruc may have been at fault for West Brom's second goal but he made amends in first-half injury time with a reflex save to repel a Jonny Evans header and keep his team in the match.

Bournemouth received another reprieve at the start of the second half when Clattenburg frustrated the home fans for a second time by disallowing Nacer Chadli's headed goal. Meanwhile, Dawson and Mings had clashed heads inside the penalty area and after receiving treatment the West Brom defender walked from the pitch - but unable to continue.

Neither side created much of note until Bournemouth pushed for an equaliser in injury time.

Foster did well to help a 25-yard shot from Lys Mousset over the crossbar before producing a full-stretch save to deny Mings at the death.

● Premier League champions Leicester dropped into the relegation zone after victory for Crystal Palace against Middlesbrough.

The Foxes play their first match since the dismissal of Claudio Ranieri against Liverpool on Monday and will do so in the bottom three.

Miller treble stuns Hill

EASTLEIGH crashed to a fourth successive National League defeat when they were beaten 3-0 at Dover.

The league's top scorer, Ricky Miller, took his tally to 30 with a hat-trick against a Spitfires side under the control of director of football Richard Hill.

Miller took just four minutes to open the scoring against an Eastleigh side who had lost their previous three games - all at home - without scoring.

Miller struck a second on 72 minutes and completed his hat-trick eight minutes later.

The Spitfires, home to Aldershot next Tuesday, have only won one of their last 13 league matches.

● Joe Bates scored the only goal in the 34th



Richard Hill.

minute as Winchester City lost at Bishops Cleeve in Division 1 South & West of the Southern League.

With Adam Roberts and Robbie Matthews both suspended, City brought the returning Danny King and Lewis Hide into defence.

Towards the end Winchester forced a couple of corners with Howard Neighbour heading over from Andy Jenkinson's delivery.

Winchester have a chance to return to winning ways when they are at home to Bideford on Tuesday.

● Salisbury beat Paulton Rovers 3-1 in Division 1 South & West of the Southern League.

They led 2-0 at half-time through Tom Whelan and Eddie Perrett. Tommy Wright added a third before Paulton replied late on.

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PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Stags' drop fears are almost forgotten now

AFC TOTTON's relegation fears are fast becoming a thing of the past.

Charlie Gunson's second-half winner made it six points out of the last six for the resurgent Stags who overcame Didcot Town 2-1 in the Southern One South & West at the Testwood Stadium this afternoon, *writes WENDY GEE*.

The first opening arrived on seven minutes when, following good work from Cherries loanee Curtis Young on the right, Nathaniel Sherborne set his sights on the far bottom corner of the net.

He curled the ball to perfection, but Leigh Bedwell clawed it away for a corner.

Five minutes later the Stags' pressure was rewarded as they got their noses in front.

Young was involved again playing in overlapping full-back Connor York whose delivery ricocheted into Sherborne's path and, amid the scramble, Didcot were penalised for hand ball.

SHERBORNE stepped up to take the penalty and, although Bedwell parried it, the ball ran loose to the Totton No 9 who tucked it away.

It is no exaggeration to say that 1-0 could easily have been 3-0 come the half-hour mark.

Young's driving run panicked the visitors and Alfie Whittingham almost capitalised with a shot just wide.

Then York's delivery from the right was met by Sherborne's dangerous downward header which Bedwell managed to turn away for a corner.

With Totton all over their Oxfordshire guests Sherborne hit the outside of the post from a tight angle after Bedwell had charged out of his goal.

Didcot's only sniff of a chance to that point had been a 13th minute shot wide by Ben Whitehead and, when they pushed forward again on 32 minutes, Totton broke quickly with Young launching the ball over the top to Sherborne to drag a decent opportunity wide.

But what should have been a comfortable lead for the Stags disappeared on 36 minutes when Didcot equalised out of the blue.

Finding himself in space towards the right corner of Totton's area George JEACOCK let fly with an angled drive that clipped the woodwork on its way in.

In the 44th minute Adam Wilde crossed deep from the left for Totton and Whittingham headed behind at the far post. Half-time:

AFC TOTTON 1
DIDCOT TOWN 1



Nathaniel Sherborne is congratulated after putting AFC Totton ahead against Didcot.



Alfie Whittingham, left, and Curtis Young, above right, in action against Didcot. Pictures by Stuart Martin.



Totton picked the tempo straight up again at the start of the second-half with Ian Oliver and Wilde each forcing corners.

The Stags looked well worthy of a second goal which eventually came on 56 minutes and was unsurprisingly manufactured down the right.

York played in Young whose low cross worked its way across the six-yard box for Charlie GUNSON to slot home.

On 59 minutes the Stags withdrew Whittingham and introduced former Wimborne Town

hotshot Mark Gamble, who has re-signed for the club after a long injury lay-off.

But, with a strong breeze now at their backs, it was Didcot who went up through the gears, forcing a double save from Charlie Searle just after the hour.

First the Totton keeper pushed over and awkward cross by Whitehead that held up in the wind and, from the subsequent corner, he safely claimed Stuart Cattell's header.

The opposing No 8s then had a chance apiece when Didcot's ex-Saint Callum McNish fired wide

from a corner before Gunson's high finish did not match his neat footwork.

Searle – making his last appearance on loan from Havant & Waterlooville – made solid saves from McNish and Whitehead before a mass shoving bout broke out as Didcot tried to retrieve the ball to take a quick corner.

Three players were booked, including Totton's Dave Allen.

Totton had some serious defending to do in stoppage time, but they kept their heads and held strong for a richly deserved 2-1 victory.

Town turn on style

Fareham Town turned on the style, sweeping aside Team Solent 3-1 to record a seventh successive Sydenhams Wessex League win at Test Park.

They never looked back after CALLUM LAYCOCK headed them into a 12th minute lead.

But for a heroic display by long serving Solent goalkeeper Lee Webber, Fareham would have won by a far wider margin, writes Mike Vimpany.

Laycock rose unchallenged from a right-side free kick to give Fareham an early lead – the visitors going on to boss the first half, with Ash Tattersall dominating the midfield and Jay Ripiner and Simon Woods causing problems upfront.

Two more goals in the opening six minutes of the second half sealed the fate of Team Solent, who offered little threat until the closing stages.

WOODS made it 2-0 and soon after TATTERSALL bagged a third as Fareham marched on.

The veteran Webber repeatedly denied Fareham, who ought to have at least doubled their lead before JESSE WALLER-LASSEN bend a free-kick round the visitors wall to



Wayne Shaw

give Solent a glimmer of hope.

Luke Douglas saved well from substitute Tyrnell Mitford, but the goalkeeping accolades belonged to Webber, his opposite number.

● Sutton had to put a defender in goal when number one Ross Worner picked up an injury against Torquay as Wayne Shaw's exit meant they had no substitute keeper on the bench.

United's reserve goalkeeper and coach Shaw resigned amid a betting probe after the 46-year-old was seen eating a pasty on the bench during the second half of the televised FA Cup fifth-round defeat by Arsenal at Gander Green Lane on Monday night.

Totton-based Shaw was shown on television tucking into the snack towards the end of the 2-0 loss, before admitting after the game he was aware that a bookmaker was offering odds on him to do so.

Boss Paul Doswell was not able to name a specialist replacement for the "rolly-poly goalie" among the substitutes at Plainmoor.

Worner was injured as he tried to save a long-range shot from Luke Young in the 14th minute, which bounced into the net. Simon Downer had to take over in goal – but Sutton still won 3-2.

PINK NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Banda heroics as holders scrape through

HOLDERS Team Solent scraped through to the semi-finals of the Sydenhams Wessex League Cup by the skin of their teeth against Tadley Calleva.

The Students had goalkeeper Bradley Banda to thank as they booked a semi-final trip to Sholing with a 4-1 penalty shootout win against the Sydenhams One underdogs.

Solent – seventh in the Sydenhams Premier – took the lead through Jim Orvis after just five minutes at Test Park.

But Tadley hit back with ten minutes remaining when James Tennant headed home Sam Hamilton's corner.

But for Banda's heroics, a penalty shootout would not have been necessary. Tadley almost

won it at the end of normal time when Brett Denham battled through one-on-one, but the Gibraltar under-19 international denied him with a crucial stop.

Banda kept up the good work in the shootout, denying Shaun Dallimore and Hamilton.

Sydenhams Wessex League Cup semi-finals: Baffins v Bashley or Shaftesbury (Feb 28), Sholing v Team Solent.

Farrell hails the 'complete' win

By Wendy Gee



ASSISTANT manager Chris Farrell lauded Blackfield & Langley's 5-1 win at Team Solent last Saturday as "a complete performance."

But he stressed that the Watersiders had "no margin for error" if they were going to keep alive their faint hopes of reeling in Sydenhams Premier leaders Moneyfields.

After watching Jamie White sink a hat-trick and Manny Soetan and Liam Robinson bag a goal apiece at Test Park, Farrell smiled: "It was as good as it gets away from home. It's not often a whole side plays at its optimum."

"People talk about winning personal battles in football and we won them all."

"It's no exaggeration to say that we could have scored eight."

"We came out of the blocks at a ferocious pace and rocked them back."

"Manny Soetan's put a 20-yard free-kick into the top corner for 1-0 and then Jamie White's had a header saved from two yards out and you wonder if that's going to be a game changer."

Dominated

"But, two minutes later, Jamie was brought down for a penalty, which he scored, and we dominated."

"We didn't give (Solent's star man) Jesse Waller-Lassen a sniff."

"The pitch was a glue pot, but perhaps that suited us because we've got powerful players."

"For the third goal Liam Robinson's left their centre-halves for dead and popped one into the corner from 20 yards."

"Jamie scored two more in the second half and Luke Winsper hit the post."

"Solent got one back when Sam Poole was penalised for fouling Waller-Lassen, but we didn't



Jamie White

think it was a penalty. The boys were disappointed because they wanted a clean sheet."

Some would say the result was sweet revenge for events at St Mary's last April when the boot was squarely on the other foot.

Blackfield were on the receiving end of a hiding that night, thrashed 5-0 by the Southampton Solent University side in the final of the Southampton Senior Cup.

But Farrell said: "That's rubbish. It's not a case of revenge. This was about us winning a game we had to win to keep on Moneyfields' shirt-tails. To get that result with Kane Daysh, Joey Byrne and Charlie Knight still missing made it even better."

"Lots of players had their best performances of the season."

Moneyfields overcame the sending-off of Alex Shephard to beat

Brockenhurst 2-1, but that game was played against the backdrop of talk that they might have points deducted.

The Hampshire FA were this week investigating the possibility that Moneys played Ash Howes while under suspension last month. Howes, ironically, had recently been signed from Blackfield and has since left Moneys for Horndean.

Cherries give it up ...

AFC BOURNEMOUTH have surrendered home advantage to hotshots Hartley Wintney in the semi-finals of the Hampshire FA Senior Cup.

Stephen Purches's Cherries under-21s will need to overcome the free-scoring Combined Counties League leaders if they are to progress to this season's showcase final.

The Bournemouth young guns will travel to Hartley's Memorial Playing Fields headquarters on Tuesday, March 7 (7.30pm) to take on a team that has hit well over 100 league goals already this term.

Last Saturday Hartley clocked up their 28th league win of 2016/17, beating CB Hounslow United 2-0 away.

Both goals came courtesy of ex-Saint Sam Argent - his first from the penalty spot and his second on the rebound after his initial effort had been saved.

Basingstoke-based Argent, 25, spent almost a decade at St Mary's, having first joined Saints' as an under-11.

He had three years as a Saints pro, playing for the reserves in the same team as Alex Oxlade-



Sam Argent

Chamberlain and training under first-team bosses Alan Pardew and Nigel Adkins.

But injuries scuppered his chances of a pro career and he was released on a free transfer in May 2011.

He went on to play as a right-back for Conference National outfit Hayes & Yeading but, deep down, Argent always wanted to be a striker.

That chance presented itself at Whitchurch United where he netted 21 goals in just 18 appearances in their Sydenhams One promotion-winning campaign of 2012/13.

So far this season the master marksman, who also captains Hartley Wintney, has banged in an impressive 41 in 33 appearances.

Hartley knocked out Southern One South & West outfit AFC Totton 3-1 to reach the last four of the Senior Cup, while the Cherries demolished Gosport Borough 6-0.

The other semi-final - also on March 7 (7.45pm) sees Southern Premier League side Basingstoke Town host last season's beaten finalists Winchester City of Division One South & West.

Basingstoke overcame AFC Stoneham 2-0 in the quarter-finals, while City progressed with a 1-0 win at Sholing courtesy of a Howard Neighbour goal.



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PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Buckler has final word

SAM Buckler had the last word in a 3-3 draw between New Milton Town and his new club Christchurch last Saturday – but not in the way he had intended.

His own goal – the second of two Priory OGs – left honours even in a pulsating Sydenhams One derby at Hurn Bridge.

Buckler has joined Christchurch on a temporary basis from Premier Division outfit Portland to get games under his belt after long-term injury.

The defender suffered a broken leg in January last year and, with Portland in impressive form at present, his chances of first-team action for his 'parent' club were limited.

Portland boss Gary Bailey said: "He has transferred (to Christchurch), but we have an open agreement that I can transfer him back up until the transfer deadline



Shane Sheridan

at the end of March.

"Ollie Cherrett (Christchurch manager) and I have an agreement that he will get some minutes with them up until that March deadline and we will then assess it."

Last weekend's draw against fourth-placed Priory further enhanced Shane Sheridan's chances of becoming New Milton's permanent manager.

The caretaker boss, who has also seen the Linnets take points off Sydenhams One high-fliers Shaftesbury and Baffins, smiled: "I've had four games, three of them against the top four, and we're unbeaten, so I'm happy."

Chris Senior and Luke Stone had given Christchurch a 2-0 lead, halved by Dom Falco on the stroke of half-time.

Senior's own goal levelled things up before Stone struck again for 3-2.

New boy Buckler turned Falco's cross into his own net on 62 minutes.

Sheridan concluded: "I probably would have taken a point before the game, but felt we were on top for most of it."

Donald: I know all this is my fault

By Wendy Gee



IT takes a big man to admit he got things catastrophically wrong.

So how refreshing that, after yet another managerial meltdown at Eastleigh, chairman Stewart Donald held his hands up for putting fans through a "costly and unsettling period" that has left the Spitfires too close to the National League relegation zone for comfort.

Having taken the tough decision to part company with rookie manager Chris Todd just four games into the season, Donald was convinced he had got the right man when Ronnie Moore – almost twice Todd's age with experience to match – was appointed at the end of August.

But after a strong start, results fizzled out for the former Tranmere and Rotherham boss, and following back-to-back defeats at home to Chester and away to Maidstone, he left due to "personal circumstances" after just three months at the helm.

Donald did not hang around naming a successor.

Just hours later he approached Barnet for Martin Allen (presumably breaking the bank in the process), a manager he had long admired.

Attracted by Allen's "title-winning success at Barnet and Gillingham and his track record of guiding teams to play-off positions," the Spitfires had surely got it right this time.

How wrong could they be.

Given a free rein to shake up the dressing room and mould the playing side of the club in his own image, Allen oversaw a drastic change of personnel during his 84-day reign.

The problem was, results were dreadful and, by his own admission, performances at the Silverlake – where Allen failed to oversee a single win – were dull, unenjoyable and way short of the standard required.

Allen's decision to dispense with crowd favourites Jai Reason and Michael Green (who has since returned) alienated the fans and, as boos rang out around the Silverlake following Tuesday's latest home flop against Macclesfield, you sensed the writing was on the wall for yet another manager.



Stewart Donald



Above (from left) - Chris Todd, Ronnie Moore and the returning Richard Hill.

Sure enough, the announcement came through around midday on Wednesday that Allen's contract had been terminated.

As news of the sacking spread, words like "circus", "shambles" and "revolving door" littered social media.

But chairman Donald was not too proud to take those criticisms on the chin. He publicly apologised for his failings and announced he would be turning to former boss Richard Hill to

give the club some "much-needed guidance" as director of football/caretaker manager.

In a refreshingly candid statement, Donald said: "I can only unreservedly apologise for what I have put our fans, players and staff through this season.

"I genuinely thought all decisions made were right at the time, but it is clear I have got this wrong. It has affected everyone's enjoyment, none more than myself.

"I am hopeful that, by bringing Richard in, he will stabilise the club and then help push us on again.

"He did a fantastic job last time. He would walk to the club to come back, he loves it so much, and this passion, coupled with his football knowledge, will help us get things right and be vital in ensuring we - or to be clearer and more accurate, me - don't continue to make mistakes in such a fundamental area."

PINK NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Why we had to sack Martin Allen

'We cannot be linked with downward spiral'

By Wendy Gee



EASTLEIGH chief executive Mark Jewell says the Spitfires were left with no alternative but to sack Martin Allen – even at the risk of the club being branded a “circus.”

Allen – the National League outfit's third manager of the season – had his contract terminated with immediate effect on Wednesday after 14 league and cup games in charge.

The 51-year-old lasted just 84 days in the Silverlake hotseat having arrived at the start of December just 24 hours after Ronnie Moore's shock exit.

Moore himself had spent only three months in the job after becoming a late August replacement for Chris Todd, who was dismissed four games into the campaign.

For a club that was targeting promotion at the start of the season, the managerial mayhem has been embarrassing, not to mention damaging, with Eastleigh slumping to 15th, just nine points clear of the drop zone.

Results were catastrophic un-



Mark Jewell.

der former Barnet boss Allen who oversaw just two victories – in the FA Cup at Halifax and at Boreham Wood in the league.

Some have branded the Spit-

fires a laughing stock, but Jewell and chairman Stewart Donald will take that criticism squarely on the chin if it means doing the right thing.

Allen's last game in charge, Tuesday's 1-0 defeat to Macclesfield, was their third home reverse in the space of eight disastrous days.

And what really alarmed the Eastleigh hierarchy was that only 2,345 fans turned out for a free admission game.

“For the same fixture previously we've had over 4,000,” said Jewell. “To be 1,800 down in half-term week is a real worry and left us no choice.”

“In any other season with this run of results and the nature of the performances, there would have been no hesitation relieving the manager of his duties.”

“But this season, where we've already lost Chris and Ronnie, it's deemed crazy and a circus down there.”

“But a relegation battle is something we've never considered since we've been at this club and it's becoming a real threat.”

“There are so many positives here – new facilities, cheap season-tickets, community work etc. – we cannot be linked with a downward spiral.”

“Fans have been leaving early, reflecting the general feeling of the support base, and that for me is more concerning than being called an idiot for getting rid of so many managers.”

Looking crestfallen after the Macclesfield loss, Allen admitted he wasn't happy and publicly laid into his players for the first time.

“We didn't win enough headers, didn't win enough tackles and didn't have enough people competing.”

“I love the atmosphere here when the crowd get behind the players, but the players are not doing anything to lift them.”

'Mistakes have been made - but with best intentions'

Eastleigh club statement following the sacking of Martin Allen:

“At the start of this season Eastleigh FC had high hopes of challenging for promotion.

Clearly there has been far too much change for this to be achieved and the managerial changes have not had the desired effect.

“This is solely the fault of the chairman who would like to apologise to all our loyal fans who deserve much better.

“Mistakes have been made, albeit with the best of intentions. However it has been a costly and unsettling period which has seen the club unfortunately struggle rather than build on previous progress.



Martin Allen

“With this in mind it is important the decision made regarding a replacement manager is considered and thorough.

“The club need more football expertise to ensure we give ourselves the best chance of future success and progression.

“Therefore the club have appointed previous manager Richard Hill with immediate effect to assist and give the club much-needed guidance.

“Richard will join as director of football. In the short term he will take charge of the team, assisted by Craig McAllister, Ben Strevens and Lee Peacock.

“He will add the relevant experience and manage the team through this next period.

“In the longer term Richard will evaluate and manage all footballing aspects of the club including selecting a replacement manager.

“Richard is obviously well-known to our fans and has huge affection for the club and it is vital that we have someone of Richard's calibre and expertise to help us with the decisions.”

Kemp: This is for those who stayed loyal



Jake Rawkins, left.

THRILLED Graham Kemp dedicated Bemerton Heath Harlequins' shock semi-final victory away at high-flying Moneyfields to “the lads that have been loyal and not jumped ship during a difficult period”.

The head coach engineered a 3-1 win over the Sydenhams Wessex Premier leaders to book their place in the final of the Russell Cotes Cup, writes Joel Holt.

And they did it after falling behind at Dover Road on Tuesday night.

Conor Bailey gave the hosts an early lead, but Bemerton hit back through Sam Griffin and former AFC Totton young guns Jake Rawkins and Jake Burgess.

The victory ended a rotten run of five straight defeats in February.

Credit

“The players deserve all the credit,” beamed Kemp.

“We had 11 fit men in the squad. It's a reward for the lads that have been loyal and not

jumped ship during a difficult period.

“We have beaten Moneyfields away twice now this season and deserved both of the victories.

“Hopefully we can start picking up some points now. I'm really pleased for the club in what has been a difficult season.”

Bemerton will face either AFC Portchester or Gosport Borough in the final.

Those two will square up at Portchester's Blanchard Wells Stadium on Tuesday (February 28, 7.45pm).

PINK NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL



At least there's good news OFF the pitch!

By Wendy Gee



IT'S been a tough time on the pitch for Eastleigh lately, but things are rapidly developing off it.

The new two-story clubhouse at the 'Shed' end of the Silverlake Stadium is on course for completion before the end of the season.

The £1 million-plus building, which will provide the club with, among other things, improved matchday facilities, office space, scholars' classroom and safety officers' control room, is expected to open prior to the last home game of the National League season against Wrexham on Saturday, April 29.

On course

Chairman Stewart Donald reported: "The new building is coming together and everything looks on course for an April completion.

"Everyone is working extremely hard to ensure we are in a position to open before the last home game to enable us to showcase what will be on offer for next season.

"Even with our current facilities, there has been an upturn in demand

for matchday hospitality and we are extremely pleased that this will increase further as we look to enhance the experience for everyone.

"There are likely to be further planning applications submitted to the council in the next few weeks as we look to enhance the facilities further."

Welcoming the Silverlake's latest addition, Eastleigh CEO Mark Jewell said: "This will tidy up our facilities and improve the matchday experience, not just for the fans but for the safety officers and all the people who currently work out of portable buildings.

"Even simple things like wi-fi will be improved. We need a proper business facility.

"We want to bring everything together and create a permanent structure to be proud of so that when we get TV cameras here, it will feel like a proper football club rather than one

that's just come out of the lower echelons.

"The new building has already brought in several new companies who are keen to sponsor us and I intend to bring these to fans' attention as we progress towards the end of the season."

Jewell also reported that he had had a "very positive and progressive meeting" with Eastleigh Borough Council's planning and highways department to improve access in and out of the Silverlake and to change the look of the site over the coming months and years.

Functional

Jewell said: "We are looking to phase the developments in one at a time so as not to create too much disruption to the general operation of the new facilities going forward.

"It is all very positive on this front and I am confident that we can deliver to the fans and the local community a facility here that everyone will be proud of and is hugely more functional than it is currently."



Artist's impression (top of page and above) of Eastleigh's new clubhouse.



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FIND THE BALL is a test of skill and football knowledge and is open to readers of the Southampton, Bournemouth, Dorset Echos, Brighton Argus and Sunday Independent, Plymouth.

You have to use your skill and judgement to determine the exact centre of the ball.

Mark an X with a ballpoint pen on the picture where you consider that position to be—clear rubber stamps and self adhesive labels will also be accepted.

Every coupon will be carefully examined and the jackpot prize will be paid to the entrant whose cross marks the exact centre of the ball when the photograph was taken.

If the Jackpot is not won, £1,000 will be added to next week's jackpot.

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competitor whose cross is nearest to the centre of the ball when there is no jackpot winner.

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If there is more than one winner the jackpot will be shared and, similarly, if there is more than one runner-up the nearest miss prize will also be shared.

RESULTS



CLOSING DATE FOR POSTAL ENTRIES
Thursday
9am,
2nd March
2017
Names of winners will be published on Saturday, 4th March, Saturday or Sunday 5th March

An incident in a Solent v Cowes Sports match

Winners

Competition number S08

JACKPOT WINNER NO WINNER

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J Burt	Southampton, Hants	B Lowe	Eastleigh, Hants
B Chapman	Southampton, Hants	K Murtagh	Southampton, Hants
A Cole	Southampton, Hants	P Nott	Southampton, Hants
F Dunn	Holbury, Hants	M Reid	Totton, Hants
D Feher	Southampton, Hants	C Sinnett	Southampton, Hants
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E Houston	Southampton, Hants	C Young	Southampton, Hants

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1. You are allowed a minimum of 60 crosses and a maximum of 450 per coupon. Coupons with 451 or more will be disqualified. Entries altered defaced or mutilated will be invalid. Crosses must be distinct and separate. 2. Competitors may submit as many coupons as they wish. Members of a family can send their entries in one envelope with a covering postal order or cheque. 3. No responsibility can be accepted for entries delayed, lost or mislaid. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. 4. Payment may be made by postal order or cheque for the correct amount payable to Newsquest, and crossed 'X Co.' Stamps will not be accepted in payment. 5. A competitor cannot win more than one share of the prize money across all titles each week. 6. The Editor's decision on winning entry or entries and matters relating to this competition is binding in honour only. NO CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE ENTERED INTO. 7. Employees of NEWSQUEST Media Group and subsidiary companies and members of their families are not eligible to enter the competition. 8. Address entries to FTB, Newspaper House, Test Lane, Southampton, SO16 9JX in a sealed envelope. Understamped entries are not accepted. 9. Prize monies are held for and on behalf of winners. 10. Do not send cash in the post. 11. Winners will be required to participate in publicity. 12. Photocopies not accepted. 13. For rules go to www.dailyecho.co.uk/promotions/rules. 14. If you pay by cheque your prize money will be paid to you once cheque has cleared.

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Daily Echo

Italian woe in midlands

This is not a good time to be an Italian manager at a midlands football club.

The dismissal of Claudio Ranieri by Leicester made him the third Italian from the region to lose his job this season, with Birmingham boss Gianfranco Zola also under pressure after a dreadful start to his reign at St Andrew's.

Former Manchester City boss Roberto Mancini is reportedly not interested in taking over Leicester, and after looking at the difficulties faced by his compatriots below, who could blame him?

ROBERTO DI MATTEO - ASTON VILLA

RECORD: P 12 W 1 D 7 L 4

A former Champions League-winning manager with Chelsea, Di Matteo was given the task of turning around the mess at Villa Park. He found life tough in this role and he won just once before being axed at the start of October, only 124 days after assuming the post.

WALTER ZENGA - WOLVES

RECORD: P 17 W 6 D 4 L 7

It was a huge surprise when Wolves' ambitious new Chinese owners opted to replace Kenny Jackett with the former Italy goalkeeper when they arrived in the summer. It started so well for



Claudio Ranieri

'The Zenga Boys' as they opened the new campaign with a six-game unbeaten streak but after just two wins in the next 11, Zenga was gone just 87 days on from his appointment.

CLAUDIO RANIERI - LEICESTER

RECORD: P 37 W 11 D 8 L 18

Having led the Foxes to the most unlikely of title triumphs last season, Ranieri started his second season with plenty of goodwill as he led them into the Champions League. A drop-off was expected but seeing the club struggling near the drop-zone prompted the owners to make the shock decision to part ways with Ranieri.

GIANFRANCO ZOLA - BIRMINGHAM

RECORD: P 14 W 1 D 4 L 9

It was every bit as surprising when Birmingham axed Gary Rowett in favour of ex-Chelsea forward Zola back in December. Having worked on a limited budget, Rowett had guided Blues to two top-half finishes and they were seventh when he departed. In 14 games since, Zola has won just a solitary encounter and is skating on thin ice.

PINK NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Wembley hero sent off on milestone night



Marvin McLean

MARVIN McLEAN marked his 550th Sholing appearance on Tuesday with a 1-0 Sydenhams Premier Division win over Amesbury Town.

But not everything went to plan for the long-serving wide-man on a frustrating evening at the Universal Stadium.

Made captain for the night in place of rested skipper Byron Mason, McLean picked up a yellow card for dissent following a foul by Jamie Bulpitt as Sholing were unable to find a first-half breakthrough against the massed ranks of Town defenders.

They had been awarded a penalty when Zac Moulard was sent tumbling by Tom Wheeler on the half-hour mark, but the

normally deadly Dan Mason – scorer of 36 goals this term – had his spot kick palmed away by keeper Paddy Creese.

On 68 minutes McLean's milestone appearance was prematurely ended when he was on the end of a heavy challenge and replaced by Byron Mason.

Second yellow

Three minutes later Wheeler saw red for Amesbury, picking up a second yellow card to add to the one collected for his part in the penalty incident.

With Creese defiantly saving shot after shot, it looked as if the visitors would hang on for a point.

But there was relief all round for the Boatmen as they finally

broke the ten men's spirited resistance with an 89th-minute winner – TJ Cuthbert's low cross finding Owen Roundell who swept the ball home at the far post.

The win moved Sholing up to second in the table, nine points behind leaders Moneyfields who may yet be docked points if found guilty of fielding an ineligible player.

Along with the Mason brothers, home-grown talent McLean has been instrumental in all Sholing's success over the years.

His finest moment came at Wembley three years ago when his 71st-minute winner sealed a 1-0 win over West Auckland in the FA Vase final.

Injury agony for Eastleigh's Childs

By Wendy Gee



ROOKIE goalkeeper Mark Childs made a big impression when he was thrown into back-to-back National League games against Boreham Wood over the festive period.

But a cruel injury blow means he won't get the chance of another Eastleigh first-team appearance any time soon.

The 20-year-old is currently hobbling around on crutches after being stretchered off earlier this month with a dislocated knee.

It came just 22 minutes into his home debut for National League South outfit Gosport Borough, where he had been sent out on loan, along with full-back/midfielder Jack Masterton, for the remainder of the season.

The young Spitfires stopper fell awkwardly after preventing Dartford captain Elliot Bradbook from scoring and was in obvious pain.

He was stretchered off and taken to hospital by ambulance after being assessed by both the Gosport and Dartford medical staff.

Reliving that painful moment at Aerial Direct Stadium, Childs said: "I slipped and it felt like my knee went in. I heard it crack."

"I've never had anything like this before. I can't use the leg."

"I don't know how long it's going to keep me out for. It all de-



Mark Childs (photo by Tony Smith).

pends whether I've done the ligaments or not."

Childs, who hails from Bournemouth, earned England under-18 schoolboy honours while on the Southampton FC Second Chance Programme at the Sparsholt Football Academy.

Now a full-time pro at Eastleigh, he will be looking to get back on

the first-team radar once he is fully fit again.

He earned plaudits from both departed boss Martin Allen and goalkeeper/goalkeeping coach Graham Stack for two top-notch performances against Boreham Wood.

That was no mean feat considering he had only just returned to

action having had his appendix out at the start of December.

"I had the operation the week the gaffer (Allen) came into the club. Then, four weeks later, he threw me in for my debut," he smiled.

"Now I've got this knee injury to get over, but the good thing is that I've only just turned 20, so I'm still young."

Gosport's goalkeeping curse continued last weekend when they had Dan Thomas red-carded in the 'battle of the Boroughs' at Eastbourne.

Alex Pike's relegation fighters had coped well on Eastbourne's 3G surface, hitting the woodwork twice in the first half.

But after Elliott Romain had plunged them into early second-half arrears, Thomas – formerly of AFC Bournemouth, AFC Totton (loan), Havant, Poole and Weymouth – took out Nathaniel Pinney with a wild one-on-one challenge and immediately saw red.

Pinney converted the resulting penalty for Tommy Widdington's men, leaving Gosport staring down the barrel of another defeat.

Gosport handed new loan goalkeeper Jon Miles, from Ebbsfleet United, his debut in Tuesday's basement battle at Truro and that too ended badly.

Miles gave away a tenth-minute penalty from which Tyler Harvey hit the first of a brace that sentenced Borough to a 2-0 defeat.

PINK

NON LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Strugglers catch the Portland backlash



Gary Bailey

VERWOOD Town were the unfortunate victims as Portland United took out their Sydenhams Premier frustrations on the division's back markers on Tuesday.

Portland had been itching to play again after having their two previous fixtures postponed.

Their home clash against Team Solent was called off due to a waterlogged pitch and United were incensed last Saturday when Amesbury Town cried off, unable to raise a team.

Verwood caught the midweek backlash as Portland swept past them 3-0 at Grove Corner, with goals from Darren Watts (2) and Ed Bastick, to stay fourth.

Speaking ahead of that game,

manager Gary Bailey said: "Having this unfortunate two-game blip has not come at a good time for us, so it's important we maintain the momentum we have built up."

Although there was nothing Portland could have done about the Team Solent postponement, Bailey was unimpressed with Amesbury's no-show.

He sighed: "If it's the weather you can accept it because it's out of anyone's control, but for it to be called off for those reasons is bitterly disappointing."

"With everything you have to go through to make the grade at this level, you just don't expect that this is the sort of thing that

can call games off."

Following the acrimonious departure of Jim Macey, Amesbury are now under the leadership of young player-boss Adam Pearson.

They mustered a team to travel to Sholing on Tuesday, but had to change their line-up 20 minutes before kick-off because Kean Greening did not turn up. It left them with just one player on the bench.

To add to Amesbury's woes, they had Tom Wheeler sent off for a second bookable offence.

Yet still it took high-flying Sholing 89 minutes to break them down when Owen Roundell pounced for the winner.

Salisbury the best side we've played

By Wendy Gee



SWINDON Supermarine boss Dave Webb reckons Salisbury are the best side in the Southern One South & West.

He reached that conclusion after watching seventh-placed Marine torpedoed 6-1 in last weekend's Wiltshire derby at the Webbs Wood Stadium – the Whites' biggest win of the season.

Swindon had led after 11 minutes through Brad Hooper's strike, but Steve Claridge's Salisbury hit back through Brian Dutton – his first goal since returning to the Ray Mac – and Justin Bennett to lead 2-1 at half-time.

Salisbury ran riot after the break through Tom Whelan, Taurian Roberts and a brace from Sutton United loanee and ex-Otterbourne striker Tommy Wright.

The win cemented their position in the play-off zone, albeit that it left the fifth-placed Whites a massive 24 points behind runaway league leaders Hereford.

But, on current form, Webb believes Claridge's men are the cream of the South & West crop – and he doesn't fancy anyone's chances of beating them in the play-offs.

Supermarine had lost just one in ten games prior to last Saturday, but their manager admitted they were totally outclassed.

"It was a very difficult day for us and I knew it was going to be," he said. "Salisbury are on a fantastic run and have got quality



Tommy Wright

players all through the side and they showed their class.

"They showed that if you are a non-League player and you train twice a week and turn up on a Saturday and play, that's the level you have got to try to achieve if

you are going to be successful.

"If they continue to play like that, I wouldn't want to be another side in the top five when the play-offs come around and have to play them because, for me, they are the best side.

"Hereford were very good but Salisbury were as good, if not slightly better.

"We weren't at the level it takes to compete with them and that's the one thing my players have to take from the game

"Salisbury are a very good side with an experienced manager and some very experienced players.

"They probably found the step-up from the Wessex League, which is a vastly inferior league to ours, a little hard to get used to at first, but now they will have ambitions of finishing in the play-offs and then winning them."

Semi finals

● A ROTATED Salisbury side reached the semi-finals of the Salisbury Hospital Cup with a 3-0 victory over Andover New Street.

Three second-half goals were enough to see off the Sydenhams Division One strugglers.

The Whites had second-choice goalkeeper Nathan Ball to thank for a penalty save with the scoreline still goalless and found themselves with a numerical advantage when ANS's Jazz Beavis was sent off early in the second half.

Nathan Connelly netted the opener on 65 minutes before Christos Papakinstantinou doubled Salisbury's lead.

Claudio Herbert added a third late on to complete the job on a night when central defender Calum Hart made his return from a long-term shoulder injury.

Steve Claridge's Whites will host Sydenhams Wessex Premier side Amesbury Town in the last four on Tuesday, April 11 (7.45pm).

NON LEAGUE FIXTURES

Monday, February 27
EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Premier Division: Hitchin v Dorchester.

Tuesday, February 28
VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE
Bromley v Braintree, Dagenham & Redbridge v Maidstone, Eastleigh v Aldershot, Guiseley v Barrow, Lincoln v York, Macclesfield v Gateshead, Solihull v Torquay, Sutton v Boreham Wood, Tranners v Forest Green, Woking v Dover.

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH
Margate v Chelmsford, St Albans v Wealdstone, Welling v Dartford.
EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Premier Division: Basingstoke v Dunstable, Cinderford v Frome, Hayes & Yeading v Cinderford, Leamington v Chesham.

Division One South & West: Bishops Cleeve v Larkhall, Didcot v Shortwood, North Leigh v Yale, Paulton v Barnstaple, Salisbury v Bridgwater, Taunton v Wantage, Winchester City v Bideford.

Southern League Challenge Cup, semi-final: Hayes & Yeading v Salisbury.
SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE
Premier Division: Bemerton HH v Fareham, Bournemouth Poppies v Andover Town, Lymington Town v Horndean, Moneyfields v Cowes Sports.

Sydenhams League Cup, quarter-final: Bashley v Shaftesbury.

Division One: Fleet Spurs v Romsey, Follands v Alton, Hamble Club v Christchurch, Laverstock & Ford v AFC Stoneham, Tadley Calvea v Baffins MR, Totton & Eling v US Portsmouth.

RUSSELL COTES CUP
Semi-final: AFC Portchester v Gosport Borough.

DORSET SENIOR CUP
Semi-final: Weymouth v Wimborne Town.

Wednesday, March 1

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE

SOUTH

Whitehawk v Hemel Hempstead.

EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Division One South & West: Slimbridge v Tiverton.

SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE

Premier Division: Verwood v Blackfield & Langley.

Division One: East Cowes Vics v Hythe & Dibden.

SOUTHAMPTON SENIOR CUP

Semi-final: Hamble Club Res v Team Solent.

PUMA ENGINEERING HAMPSHIRE

PREMIER LEAGUE

PEHPL Combination Cup, semi-final: Bush Hill Res v Winchester Castle Res (at Romsey Town FC, 7.45)

Friday, March 3

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE

Chester v Tranmere (BT Sport, 7.45).

Saturday, March 4

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE

Aldershot v Lincoln, Barrow v Sutton, Boreham Wood v Bromley, Braintree v Wrexham, Dover v Solihull Moors, Forest Green v Macclesfield, Gateshead v Dagenham & Redbridge, Maidstone v Southport, North Ferriby v Woking, Torquay v Guiseley, York v Eastleigh.

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE

SOUTH

Concord v Margate, Dartford v Bath City, Eastbourne Borough v Truro, Ebbsfleet v East Thurrock, Hemel Hempstead v Chelmsford, Maidenhall v Hampton & Richmond, Poole v Hungerford, St Albans v Bishops Cleeve, Wealdstone v Gosport Borough, Weston-super-Mare v Oxford City, Whitehawk v Welling.

EVO-STIK SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Premier Division: Biggleswade v Metherly, Chesham v Cinderford, Chippenham v Dunstable, Cirencester v Hayes & Yeading, Frome v Banbury, Kings Lynn v Stratford, Kings Langley v Cambridge City, Leamington v St Neots, Redditch v Dorchester, Slough v Basingstoke, St Ives v Hitchin, Weymouth v Kettering.

Division One South & West: Barnstaple v Salisbury, Didcot v Hereford, Larkhall v Evesham, Paulton v Bideford, Shortwood v Mangotsfield, Slimbridge v AFC Totton, Swindon Supermarine v Bridgwater, Tiverton v North Leigh, Wimborne v Wantage, Winchester City v Taunton, Yale v Bishops Cleeve.

SYDENHAMS WESSEX LEAGUE

Premier Division: Aclresford v Bournemouth Poppies, Amesbury v Blackfield & Langley, Andover Town v Verwood, Bemerton HH v Bashley, Cowes Sports v Whitchurch, Fareham v Fawley, Newport IoW v Brockenhurst, Portland v Horndean, Sholing v Moneyfields, Team Solent v Lymington.

Division One: AFC Stoneham v Alton, Andover NS v Hamble Club, Baffins MR v Laverstock & Ford, Christchurch v Hythe & Dibden, Downton v Weymouth Res, East Cowes Vics v New Milton, Pewsey Vale v Follands, Shaftesbury v Ringwood, Tadley Calvea v Fleet Spurs, US Portsmouth v Romsey Town.

PUMA ENGINEERING HAMPSHIRE

PREMIER LEAGUE

Premier Division: Colden Common v Bush Hill, Fleetlands v Stockbridge, Hayling Utd v Hedge End Rangers, Overton v Clanfield, Paulsgrove v Liphook, QK Southampton v Infinity, Winchester Castle v Liss Athletic.

Division One: Four Marks v Upham, Headley v AFC Petersfield, Netley Central v Lyndhurst, South Wonston Swifts v Sway.

Combination: Bush Hill v Baffins, Clanfield v Four Marks, Liphook v Headley, Michelmersh & Tims v Winchester Castle, Overton v Hedge End Rangers.

HAMPSHIRE INTERMEDIATE CUP

Semi-final: Locks Heath v Shanklin.

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